



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

HD WIDENER



Hw T7FJ X

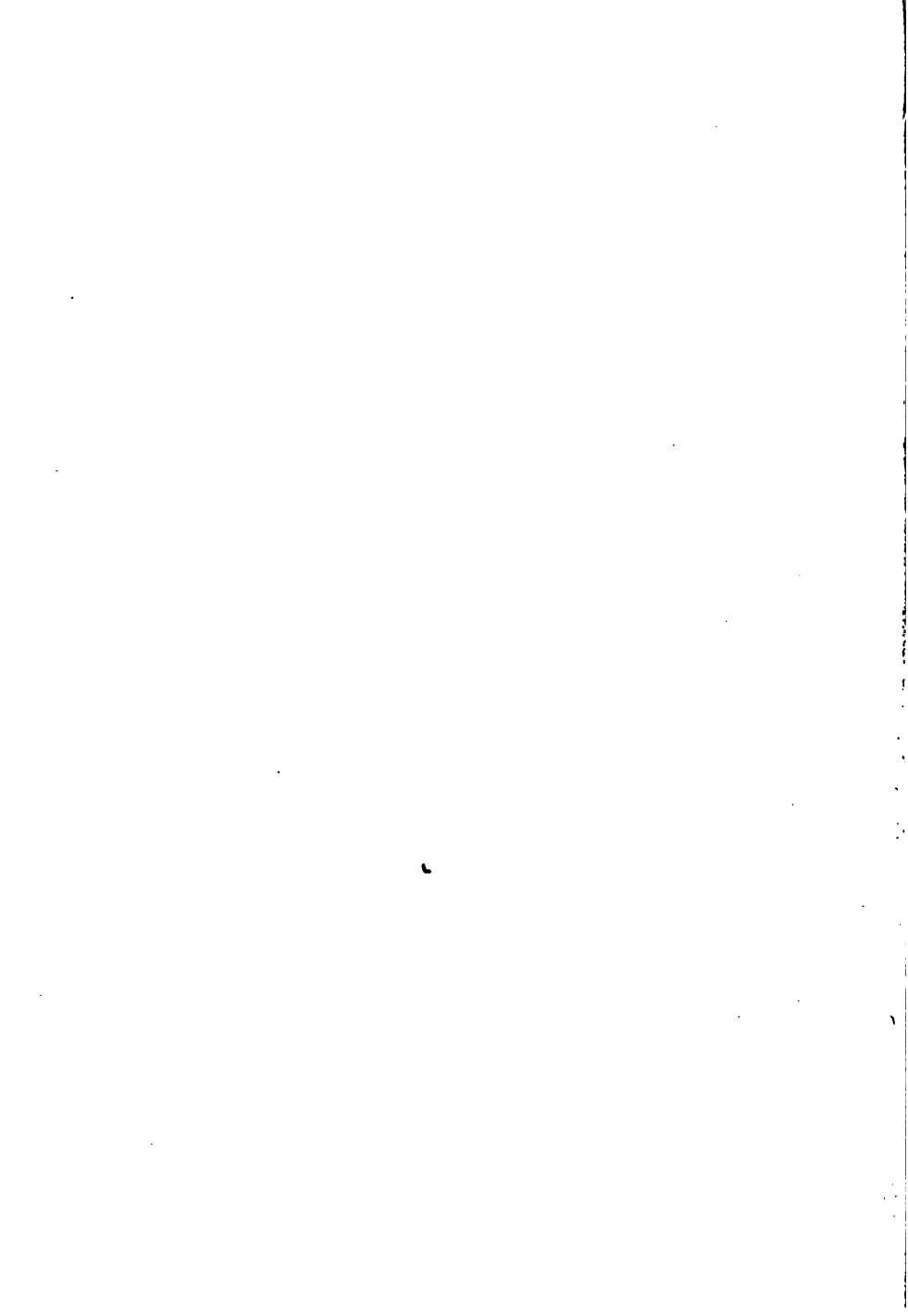
C1316.49

Harvard College Library



THE GIFT OF
GRENVILLE HOWLAND NORCROSS
OF BOSTON
Class of 1875

~~50~~
23



STUDIES IN OPTIMISM

OR

SUBJECTS SUGGESTED BY THE HUMANISM
AND HOPE OF THE TIMES.

BY

ALFORD BROWN PENNIMAN

Author of the "History of Union Church," "The Fruit of the
Spirit and other Sermons."

ADAMS, MASS.
FREEMAN PUBLISHING CO.
1902.

C 1316.49

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
GRENVILLE H. NORCROSS

Dec 13, 1932

COPYRIGHT, 1902, BY ALFORD BROWN PENNIMAN.

DEDICATED
TO MY PATIENT READER.

PREFACE.

THESE studies are printed with the hope that they will not retard the new works of new days. They have been presented to my people in substantially the form in which they here occur. The themes have been chosen from that range where doubtful controversy finds the air too rare for breathing. They deal with Jesus as the head of humanity and not simply the head of the church. The great business of the preacher is to develop manhood, and the themes which serve this purpose are the large themes of faith, hope and love, divine humanism and optimism, the power of the Holy Spirit as ethical, rational, historical and immanent, the knowledge of God as derived from an unfolding brotherhood.

The Bible is a theme, for the pulpit, as an evolution within an evolution, an inspiration recorded within an inspiration too great for record. Progress is often slow, because even good men have yet no practical belief in the

PREFACE.

truth that every man is immortal, rather than "immortable," and therefore has stamped upon him by his Maker the image and superscription of his infinite value, attested by the cross of Christ. The cross is an accident incident to the freedom of man, but reveals the essential which abides in the love and eternity of God. To convince all men that a righteous society is surely coming on Earth, and each man of immortality, there must be on the part of all God's children a vital faith in the qualities for which the name of Jesus historically stands.

A. B. P.

Adams, Mass., December, 1902.

CONTENTS.

SERMON	PAGE
I. THE IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE OF LOVE	3
II. CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM	39
III. GAINING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD	71
IV. THE VALUE OF MAN	91
V. WHAT IS THE BIBLE	115
VI. THE GOSPEL POWER	135
VII. LIFE AND IMMORTALITY	155

I.

THE TWO-FOLD IMPERATIVE AND
PRIVILEGE OF LOVE.

"The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

—Rev. XXI: 16.

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that
I seek

In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: A Hand like this
hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the
Christ stand!"

—*Browning's Saul.*

"There are three possible states and moods under which the mind may fulfil its function. There is a dull and quiescent condition, when reason and judgment act, but act without fervor. Power is there, but it is latent, just as heat is in the unkindled wood lying in the grate, but the heat is hidden. Then there is a higher mood of the mind, when, under the influence of conversation or reading, the mind emits jets and flashes of thought, through witticism or story; but this creative mood is intermittent and spasmodic. Last of all is that exalted mood when the mind glows and throbs, when reason emits thoughts, as stars blaze light; when the nimbus that overarches the brows of saints in ancient pictures literally represents the effulgence of the mind. Work done in the lower moods is called mediocre; work done by the mind in the second stage is associated with talent, but when through birth or ancestry, the mind works ever in regnant or supernal moods, it is called genius. Affirming that all minds rise into this higher mood at intervals, we may also affirm that all the best work in literature or art or commerce has been wrought during these exalted states when love for the work in hand has rendered the mind luminous and crystalline."—*Nevell Dwight Hillis. The Investment of Influence, p. 265.*

I.

THE TWO-FOLD IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE OF LOVE.

"But the Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second, like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets."—Matt. XXII: 34-40.

THESE Pharisees were partisans. The motive of their gathering was admiration for a man, who had silenced their adversaries. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection. The Pharisees did. The crowd was hungry for argument. There was no delay. A theological lawyer asked, with an air of superiority, a question which now would surely be regarded as very

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

commonplace. His inquiry was made "tempting" Jesus, much as a cow-boy at a safe distance, protected by others, might seek, half in earnest, half in sport, to entangle a beast of burden or of prey.

Jesus gave the lawyer the expected answer. The first and great command is to love God. But the lawyer's way of loving God was not the way of Christ. Jesus adds: "And a second like unto it is this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The Scribes and Pharisees were notorious breakers of both commands. For them, ritual was love, Divine commands were priestly rules, beliefs and traditions were laws. For Jesus there were no rules, save those deriving authority from a principle. Worship, in his teaching, could not be substituted for that principle. To him there was no such thing as a guilty opinion or a ceremonial sin. There was one principle of love, with infinite applications, divided by two similar objects, God and man, Father and child.

If God is love and the source of love,

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

any intelligent being ought to love Him supremely. But in the real world, the order of the ideal is not the order of time. Before love can be intelligent, time is required to escape wrong ideas of the object loved. To love the neighbor, as thyself, is not the same as to love the neighbor, as one ought to love himself. The former is Jewish justice. The latter is Christian principle. If our love to self be the measure of love to another, then the higher the self-love, the more good bestowed. Love, for the better self, is given with "all the soul, might, mind and strength," that the neighbor may rejoice. Love for man, founded in a deep self-respect, is the key to Divine love. The second command comes before the first, because there is a law of all progress, that obedience to known law is the only way to arrive at a knowledge of the unknown.

The invectives of Jesus Christ fell like hail upon the Scribes, because they had cauterized their human feeling, and were attorneys for a God having all the attri-

INPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

butes of a devil. They frightened the unlearned, by preaching future torment for those who would not neglect their parents to enrich the opulence of the Temple. Jesus asserted that the penalties of the future were for those who neglected their brethren. He was not a "vivisectionist of souls," but strong strokes were needed to pierce the conscience of a Scribe. God is not a great Pharisee. To love God we must serve man. That is real in religious thought, which has passed through religious experience. We discover, by a living way, that God is not a being called love, but a lovable God.

Love is one, indivisible and progressive. Not only is God love, but love is God. The Divine Spirit and Providence bring us slowly, but surely, into the consciousness of God. We may not say, This is human, that Divine. No one can draw the line. We live under such an economy, that to begin with any side of love, is an earnest of ending with a glorified humanity, whose length and breadth and height are equal.

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

Perfect love has balance. This fact is emphasized, in the text, by the conjunction "And." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God * * *and* thou shalt love thy neighbor." Love comprehends all being, and ceases at the point of wilful exclusion. Love is manhood, including morality toward man, or righteousness, and morality toward God, or piety. Service expands the ideal. Ideals react and expand service. Kindness and firmness mingle. Zeal walks with patience. Dignity is both flexible and earnest. Bravery grows in grace and becomes courage.

Verily, love is the science and art of living, the natural powers in tune, the whole carriage of the soul. Thence extend all gracious ministries, like the sevenfold colors of the sunlight. Love is not enthusiasm, nor taste, nor the social nature, nor intellect, nor emotion, nor will-power, nor imagination. Love is enthusiasm and taste, and the social nature, and intellect, and emotion, and will-power, and imagination harmonized by the Spirit of God.

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

The first task is to control appetite and passion. Here the low lines of animal cunning assert themselves, and are imputed unto men for sagacity. The last vestige of this appears as spice in a late popular novel. The hero, David Harum, lays down the motto, "Do unto the other feller, the way he would like to do unto you, and do it fust." While we smile at the funny side of the fact, we can not forget that the strength of the story lies in its humanity.

The history, of each individual, and each generation, epitomizes the history of the race, in our escape from animal domination. The laws of Moses sustained the same relation to his own high plane as leader, that our civil laws sustain to the Christian ideal. The object of Moses was to secure decency. The commands written on stone were written for men just freed from chattel slavery. So far as their position in Egypt went, there was little difference between chattel and cattle. Their religion was sensual and their gods

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

many. Laws, too ideal, would have been worse than none. The statutes were negative. Men can avoid when they can not attain; or rather their avoidance may be a heroic attainment. Note how ten rules cleared the ground for the foundation of love.

First. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The immediate force of this was, Thou shalt not deify fears and lusts.

Second. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," means, Down with all that symbolizes the licentious. Abandon the cause of disease. The infancy of painting and sculpture, could not then have defense, without peril to the higher art of character. Before Art can be the handmaid of Religion, there must be development of morality, and a division of labor between Palestine and Greece.

Third. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The reverent can not take root in the profane. The titles of God are too sacred to be dragged in the mire. Today it is clear,

INPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

that the man who ever goes about in complaint, is swearing inside, however free from oath. The police force of Israel did not report this kind of profanity. Otherwise all the camp might have been under arrest, with no one on duty.

Fourth. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." It was more practical to regard one day than seven. It was wiser to observe one place as holy, than many holy places. Jesus taught that all things derive their sacredness from their power to benefit men. He would rebuke those who deprive workmen of a rest day on the same principle that he struck a blow for the liberty of his disciples to do works of mercy on the Sabbath.

Fifth. "Honor thy father and mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." At last we have an exception, a positive command. This rule had the aid of the family, in addition to public worship. Obedience enables the young path-finder to take advantage of the past. The patri-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

archal prepares for the national. The household contains the germ of God's self-revelation. Moses left to a later generation the disposition to hammer this nugget, till it enjoined all reverence and obedience, including the plain duty of "Young America" to respect his elders.

Sixth. "Thou shalt not kill." Human life is sacred. Death followed trivial encounter. The lawgiver himself had broken this law before it was written on stone. The rule forbade murder. Nothing was said about a quick temper. Many things kill. Foolish fashions, bad ventilation, long stairways, poor water-supply, dissipation gradually murder men. Israel was commanded to avoid the craft and violence that end in immediate death.

Seventh. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The worst form of impurity is singled out. Prohibition did not prohibit, but there were gains. Christ forbade the lustful eye. Moses was content with less. Now the rule is used to discourage all indelicacy.

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

Eighth. "Thou shalt not steal." The rights of property are inviolable. It is not a question of title, but ownership. Courts can steal. Petty larceny is not half as criminal. When men led a plundering life, with no fixed abode, and with facility of escape, there was slight protection. Moses did not emphasize public spirit or systematic benevolence. There is a modern discovery, that stealing time is stealing money. Returning borrowed articles is a late achievement.

Ninth. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." The worst form of lying. Here is no injunction to love the truth. A half-loaf is thankfully taken.

Tenth. "Thou shalt not covet." Seeking something for nothing, and without regard to the rights of others, is condemned. This is the alphabet of political economy and ethics. Men were rolling in sloth and greed. The problem was to enforce a law insuring a few specified

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

These commands were adjusted to the average man. Doubtless some did not need rules about matters of their habitual regard. These souls were the heralds of love's own sunrise. Parental care fostered morality. The settled homes of Canaan took the place of the Arabian tent, kept the traditions and lessened the burdens of the people. Patriotism grew. Judges, psalmists and prophets arose, separated by lessening spaces. There was an ever growing company who exclaimed, "Oh, how we love thy law!" One speaks for others saying:

"Lord who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle,
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill
He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness,
And speaketh truth in his heart,
He that slandereth not with his tongue,
Nor doeth evil to his friend,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor."

Here is truth in heart and behaviour. Vague fear has given place to explicit reverence. The author has discovered that God loves the righteous man.

INPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

In the drama of Job, we have this type of character at its best estate. Job will not swerve, though the God of his strange friends should turn against him. The hero pleads integrity as against power, and declares that he will do so till death. To please Omnipotence, he will not yield to pessimism and curse his own God of righteousness.

Time would fail me to speak of all the prophets. Many voices join at last in singing with the skylark of the Psalms, who sings as he soars, and "soaring ever singeth."

"The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want."

The spiritual element, of the Old Testament history, merges gradually into more definite anticipation and forecast, till the history *and* revelation culminate in Jesus the Christ.

The New Testament lifts all former standards into a white light. Sufficient moral preparation to receive a revelation, ever finds God ready to reveal. Duty becomes in-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

tense. How can a man get right, when the high ideal of Jesus has increased the task a thousand fold? When at last even the Jobs and Isaiahs must change their minds, and cry out in despair, "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death," what can the weakest man do? The answer is found in that unique personality, who joins love to God and man.

We have seen how God has led men, a step at a time, from the range of outward conduct up to a point in history, where all currents of character seem to join in one man. We have his portrait in the New Testament. There were philosophers before him, but they had little sway with the masses. They did not appreciate the individuals of whom the mass is made. There were men of popular power, but they failed in depth and continuity. Men of zeal arose, blindly buzzing themselves in and out of the world. To Jesus religion and morals seem easy save in the wilderness, in the garden and at the cross. He kept close to men, and bore their sins

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

and sorrows. He fought and won every battle, to which human powers are exposed, and his baffled temptations came and fled on higher planes, and under more subtle disguises, than those which overwhelm us. Nevertheless he conquered.

Men grope upward looking for God. He came downward as a sunbeam. His descent was without condescension. He honored the good already in the world. He did not preach a new law, but the rounding out of the old. "The Kingdom at hand" makes all possible peace with the past. He asked in effect, Am I accused of forsaking the law and the prophets? "Blessed are the poor in spirit," the teachable and open minded toward all that is true in the past, "for theirs *is* the Kingdom" of the future. "Blessed are the meek," for they shall have pursuing them all the promises of earthly prosperity promised in the olden day. The soul lens is delicate and accumulates dust, but "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Such purity has a right

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

to correct the old laws. A look may be adultery. Anger is the spirit of murder. Love for our unrighteous neighbors and enemies should supplant retaliation. This is the example of God and the destiny of his children, to love where love is needed. The preacher appears before them as the son of a carpenter. He does not declare himself the Messiah, though he does declare the Messianic principle. If he were a false prophet, the unlearned could test him by his fruits. Life appealed to life. What an appeal! What a life! His was a character, which joined humble submission with the proudest freedom. Some soar among the clouds. Others despising sentiment, walk on the ground of reason working toward matter, and never feel a wing-beat. Jesus was ideal and real. The lamented Ruskin, however partial to one artist, taught us the beauty there is in truth. Carlyle taught, however savagely at times, the truth there is in beauty. The Christ brought beauty and truth into perfect vital union. Inward and outward

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

beauty combined with inward and outward strength. If others were coldly secular, he gave to all things a spiritual glow. If others have identified all progress with some special stage of it, he knew no arrest of development. If there is any teaching for all ages, that teaching is the teaching of Jesus Christ. There is a significant parable of this truth, in the painting entitled, "The Dream of Pilate's Wife." The artist, Dore, depicts the march of Christian civilization. In the background moves the great multitude whom no man can number. Three lights appear. One gleams from a lamp in the apartment of the Roman matron who is walking in her troubled dream. Another glows from the cross upon the multitude. The third shines from the face of "that just man," whom to see was never to forget. These lights blend. Christ is inseparably joined to human history and welfare. He is not only a memory, but a prophecy, and not only a prophecy, but a presence.

But, not to anticipate, let us still ap-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

proach the deep secret of love, in the rational faith that the best comes last. We find that Jesus practices his teaching of man's dependence on God. He sought solitude, where like the unruffled surface of some mountain lake, his soul, sheltered from the winds of the world, reflected the face of God. This dependence is not a defect, but man's normal state. The human becomes more human by communion with the source of humanity. Jesus knew nothing of worry, the greatest curse of good men. He enjoyed an accumulation of power, due to repose of conviction. Where others talk of a "leap of faith," he took the firm step of faith. Ordinary life becomes extraordinary. Art and Nature yield hidden meanings. All Christ touches turns to gold. His themes break through all barriers of speech and race. They enlist the scholarship and the people of nineteen centuries. Five hundred years of the English Bible alone make a crescendo of moral grandeur. As the world widens, the power of God required by Jesus, is

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

not less needed by his younger brethren. Love to man includes the complex subjects of a just wage, the tariff in relation Porto Rico, temperance at home, in Hawaii and the Philippines, sound money, the health of operatives, capital and labor. All such topics are religious or society will be infidel. Christians are learning that the Christian use of capital touches a thousand lives, where stated benevolences touch only ten.

The objection is offered, in some quarters, that affairs of state and society belong to Caesar, and not to the Christian. The Church and the ministry are told to mind their own business. Religion is one thing and business is another. This attitude ignores the fact that Christianity has happily been so long in the world, that wherever it is in operation, there has been a passing out of the sanctuary and the Sabbath into the mill, the market and the caucus. Many need to be reminded, as one has said, that in a

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

republic, before, on, and after election day, every citizen is a sovereign.

The apostle Paul bore witness, that in this world we know in part and prophesy in part. This applies on both ethical and spiritual lines. We can not lay down rules and declare how vigorous ethical preaching should be, nor say how much penalty is wise for preaching in general. Preachers differ in ability to deal with subjects, motives and men. Christ chose preaching because living truth is the world's greatest power. Finney preached the dignity and freedom of the will, and gained the power of an unused truth. Bushnell taught the dignity of every faculty, and men came to realize that they were sons of God, not by analogy, but in reality. Men who learned of both these teachers, became not only "keen, active, executive" and sacrificing, but "sweet, kindly and fullsouled." In general the sower follows the plowman, as Jesus follows John. Edwards, Park and Finney

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

are followed by Fairchild, Storrs and Beecher.

There is difficulty in joining extremes. The broadest men feel it. The easier task is to find a middle ground. This compromises questions too deep for compromise. Easier still is it to adopt an extreme. This man may be a fanatic. The man of the happy mean, may be a weather-vane. Our circumstances set limits to our activities, even when our sympathies are broad. He who made Loch Katrine immortal so that its simple scenery is a paradise of rhythmic lore and poetic feeling, was not the man who would be likely to make that lake quench the thirst, and clean the streets of a city on the Clyde.

Everything hangs on love, the law and the prophets, nature, science. That is a false religion which fears science. That is a false science which fears religion. The universe is unity in diversity. The open mind will not deny a fact, because a way has not been found to harmonize that fact

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

with another. Christianity is a progressive religion, the sum of the truth in all religions, and vaster, but it can not yield all we desire for the satisfaction of reverent curiosity. Matter and mind are not one, but there is a unity which includes them. Science will lead us to God. God will lead us to science. Concerning men on either side of a dispute, now rapidly passing, there are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamed of in their philosophy.

The world has often found two ideas too much for the shelf of one mind. One idea has been compelled to climb down without ceremony, that another thought might be comfortable on the same mental shelf. "Behold the man!" cries one. "Behold the God!" cries another. The broad browed Galilean says, for substance, Surely two great and harmonious ideas are better than one. No one word is large enough to represent Christianity. James talks of works. He means deeds that do good as against abstract faith.

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

Better silence in the prayer meeting and no sand in the sugar, than speech therewith. Paul wrote about faith. He means vital connection with the source of all true activity. John tells us, that if we do not love the visible brother, it is gratuitous to mention our love for the invisible God. In the familiar poem, "Abou Ben Adhem," the angel announces him as foremost, "who loves his fellowmen." The poet is right, provided there is no design to substitute philanthropy for religion. Paul's poem is better, wherein he tells us, that eloquence, theology, philanthropy, religious zeal, are all nothing without love. The mountain of love has many ways of approach, is never twice alike, can not be appreciated from one place, at one time or by one person. Faith is present vision.

Have not men, blindly wise, bent upon happiness, too long sought peace by obedience to law? In other words, has not the most important law of all been forgotten, the law of faith? By faith I mean moral sense, "sanctified imagination," the power

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

in us to appropriate our ideal, our God. The message is, Seek not peace by obedience, but peace and obedience by faith. The wise man will put himself under the sway of love as Gospel, that he may be inspired for love as duty. In all ages God has led men by hope. They follow on to know the Lord, stumbling blindly upward, until they recognize their leader, and exclaim with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." God is the strong warp, with the double thread of love from God and love to God. Man is the woof, with the intertwining threads of love to man and love from man. Christianity is the fabric. Write me as one who loves his fellow-men, who loves Christ, the manifold disclosure of man, the heart of very God.

When at last we reach the culumiation of the life of Jesus, we find in his death the same love which actuated his life. I can not believe that his death is like the death of the millions, who, in darker days, have been supposed to go like autumn leaves to enrich the globe. His love con-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

quers death. Love is no longer defined by a rule of reciprocity. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another *as I* have loved you."

Surveying the finished work of the historic Christ, what is the precise power which any soul can use to surmount the sense of accumulated sin? It is not an act of God, lifting us out of an undesirable into a desirable place. The power is not physical. The power that saves is moral. It is not any *single* moral act. The moral power is not an isolated deed of mystic sentiment, wreathed with fear and shadow about a Roman crucifix. In the voluntary death of Christ, the new command of love is written in the largest type. His own ethics shrank at first from the bitter cup. The disciples fell into despair. Jew and Greek are still stumbled by the Cross. Not the will of Jesus, but the will of the Father, was done. The death of Jesus therefore is peculiarly the revelation of God's interior life, notwithstanding the victory in Geth-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

semane. Back of power, before all history, within all souls, behind the single acts and incidents of redemption, there is an infinite suffering love for every human being.

In the light of this event, we see that what Jesus was in his brief life on Earth, God is forever. Jesus is not only a hostage given by God to us, but he so identifies himself with us that he struggled with God in the garden that he might remain. He gave up only when he saw that it was expedient for us that he should go, in order that the local might become universal and that the Spirit of God might comfort us with the truth, that the "lamb was slain from the foundation of the world."

We are led to think, not of our love to God, but of God's love for us. At the point where life and death met in the Son of Man there is the inmost disposition of the transcendent God. Not Jesus Christ, not Jesus Christ crucified, but Jesus Christ crucified yesterday, today and

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

forever! God does not make an offer of salvation. He is himself an everlasting free gift. Jesus is like an arm of the sea, bringing the very quality of the ocean far up between the peopled banks, which make a coast like that of Scotland. The moon moved waters press inland, rebuking the mouth of each propitiating stream from the inconsistent hills of fate, and give up their force and volume with resistless tide.

The love of God passes measure, because unconditional. Like all the upper and nether air, his love is pervasive, vital, electric. That which has ever been around and within men, comes to the surface of consciousness. Franklin's kite string and key gave us the use of electricity. The historic Christ gave us, I say it reverently, the use of God. Sin does not cause God to deny himself. Sin is not an obstacle to love. God is God, because prompt at the point of need. God is disclosed in the storm of sin and passion, at first a flash light of the Eternal,

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

but at length inspiring all the sons of progress and providing the motor for the widest moral commerce.

What then is the bearing of this interpretation of love on the Church and the individual?

First. the relation of this conception of love to the Church. Christ is the unqualified head of the Church just so far as the Church is identical with the social and spiritual Kingdom of God. The Church grows. It takes on more power and does more. There is ferment and expansion. There is being repeated, nowadays, our Master's last prayer for unity. This unity will not be formal. Christianity needs to be defined and enthroned before we can organize it. No one wants to see all the evils of all the sects combined in one organization. The first secret is learning that variety is necessary to unity. To insist on uniformity of belief is to fly in the face of Nature and God, to turn denominationalism into a species of polytheism. The sects are variously equipped dispen-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

saries. We may expect too much or too little from them. They are work shops, not picture galleries, hospitals, not clubs. As the Church grows, she will learn to abandon much now thought to be necessary baggage.

The devotional church needs the message, "Pure ritual and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction and to keep" itself "unspotted from the world." The church standing for a single ordinance, or for none, should hear again, "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." The emotional church will hear Christ say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The church of good works, will accept the message "This is the work of God that ye believe on [appropriate] him whom He hath sent." The doctrinal churches must heed that declaration, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify concerning me,

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

but ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The church of the "last things" will accept the word, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."

The coming Church will make her doors as wide as love, as wide as the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem when placed side by side. She will be more catholic than the Roman, more apostolic than the Anglican, more devotional than Episcopalian. Emotion will have place, but the name Methodist will not survive. Symbols will improve, but the word Baptist will pass. Activity will be stimulated, but Unitarianism will not appear on the banner. Men will go on thinking and making statements of belief, but Congregationalism and Presbyterianism must lose their lives to save them. One clear note of love will re-sound in Christendom. Apostolicity, ritual, conduct, feeling, thought will be struck through with a vital atmosphere. Mediaevalism and paganism will linger only in patches, like our April snow on the north side of a stone wall, or be-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

neath low clumps of evergreen. But even there some arbutus will neighbor and make no apology. The winter of discontent will pass. The presence of Christ will be the soul of the feast.

Second, the bearing of this view of love on the individual. The law says we ought. The Gospel says we can. The invitation is extended not to talent, to culture, to creed or to character, but to every man. At no stage of our moral education does God stop us with an intellectual stone wall. He requires today what he required in the time of Hosea. "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" The supreme question is, are we lovers of the best love we know? This is the cure for doubt, for care and for sin. The steps are renunciation of all that is hostile to love, adherence to all that is friendly to love and the construction of love itself. Mistakes may be serious, but they are not sins. The only sin is a refusal to love. Having made the best

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

choice, it is time for a man to ask, What are the ideas which live next door to love? What wrong ideas have I about sin, immortality, Jesus Christ, God? Prior to all is the duty of love. To illustrate, let us start with Jesus as a good man. Follow that goodness. The result is we are better men. We now appreciate him more. We follow that better conception and discover that he is the best man. The best man followed proves unfathomable, therefore Divine. There is only one whom the world agrees to call the best. It is of very much importance to us, that we have the true idea of him, as a "hand reached down" from God and not a groper with other teachers of the world's history. More is it to Jesus Christ, that we appreciate his love than that we explain it.

What is the plane of our ethics? Are we living in the day of Moses, content to keep the ten rules? Do we live in the later day of David or Isaiah, conscious of some gains, but without a grand ideal? Do we live in a century, boastful of prog-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

ress, but forgetful of inspiration? Raphael's St. Cecelia reminds us how poor and coarse are all our earthly attainments, in comparison with the Divine. The patron saint of music is surrounded in the painting, by Paul, John, Mary Magdalene and Augustine. They enjoy her renderings. But while she plays, a melody of unseen angels makes their hearts beat with a joyous wonder. The earthly music is forgotten. The crude instrument, of late so full of charm, is fallen in deserved neglect. There is room for analysis of moral relations and conditions. We must weigh and measure, contrast, suggest and discriminate. But, oh, how wearisome is that process, when we have failed to bring down into it a sense of God's love.

A second coming of the Son of man, with a body like Apollo, a purpose like Cromwell, an intellect like Shakspeare, a heart like St. John, would be incarnate weakness, compared with the constant coming again of the Christ in the soul. Love is the center and circumference of an infi-

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

nite glory entering the humblest heart. Often what is called religion makes men hard and cold and partial and selfish. Often what is called morality makes men proud, ambitious, envious and avaricious. There is a music sweeter than the clink of coin. It is the music of the wedding feast. The bans have been declared for the marriage of the moral and the spiritual. There is a host, who stands every test of quality, harmony, variety, richness, beauty and power. The severity of his justice is mercy in disguise. We know not what our stripes will be. We only know that we are accountable, not to a magistrate, but to a parent. Dynasties perish. The household daily grows in power to interpret God. We are no longer servants, but friends. Is one so base, that he can give to such love, a seventh of his time or a tenth of his income? Shall we give to God, only our sad feelings and our stated prayers? Is business too good or pleasure too radiant, to associate with the source and crown of joy? Faith means

IMPERATIVE AND PRIVILEGE.

salvability. Love is salvation. Law is love. Love is law and Gospel. Honor to the law of liberty. All honor to the liberty of law. Hail to the two-fold love. All hail to the Chief in the legion of lovers, Who "hath joined together" what "no man" may "put asunder" law and love, Earth and Heaven, God and Man!

II.

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

"See, then, how the issue is forced. Either nature is sufficient of itself and wants no God at all, or else this whole idea, the history of which we have been tracing, is radically false. * * What, then, is the alternative view? It is the utter rejection, with Berkeley and with Swedenborg, of the independent existence of matter and the real efficiency of natural forces. * * In a word, according to this view, there is no real efficient force but spirit, and no real *independent* existence but God."—*Le Conte. Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought, second ed. revised, p. p. 300-301.*

"It is eternal nature of God to give himself for men, that they may be lifted up out of their lowness and meagerness unto him. Now this view is to be found all through the Bible, from beginning to end, and it is to be found nowhere else, that I know of, as it is found in that book. * * It is the slowest and last thing for men to learn. I do not understand this to be the idea of Calvinism and Augustinianism. I hold Calvinism to teach the sovereignty of absolute will and wisdom. Every man is a Calvinist, no matter what church he belongs to, who has a great deal of will, and thinks it ought to dominate."—*Henry Ward Beecher, Yale Lectures, Third series, p. 23.*

"Finally, religion is not a creed, long or short, nor a ceremonial, complex or simple, nor a life more or less perfectly conformed to an external law; it is the life of God in the soul of man, recreating the individual; through the individual constituting a church, and by the church transforming human society into a kingdom of God."—*Lyman Abbott, The Evolution of Christianity, p. 257.*

"I believe in a future age yet to be revealed, which is to be distinguished from all others as the godly or godlike age, an age not of universal education simply, or universal philanthropy, or external freedom, or political well-being, but a day of reciprocity and free intimacy between all souls and God. Learning and religion, the scholar and the Christian, will not be divided as they have been. The universities will be filled with a profound spirit of religion and the *bene orasse* will be a fountain of inspiration to all the investigations of study and the creations of genius."—*Horace Bushnell, Work and Play.*

II.

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad;
and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."—
Isaiah XXXVI: 1.

THE message for the age is a message of hope. God resides in his world, and his world is daily becoming more conscious of the fact. The consciousness of this residence is perfect in Jesus Christ. Let us survey a part of the ground of hope for the triumph of Christianity, the base of the claim for the exaltation of the Christ.

Beginning at the bottom, we ask, what light do nature and science give, as affording a basis for religion and righteousness? Whatever has been placed near enough to us, we can examine. Beforehand we could not say what forms creative energy would

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

take. We explore what has been done. Agreements among men of science furnish certain facts. The universe has a behaviour excluding chance and caprice. This is law. Behind this habit is an infinite energy. All events have unity, continuity, veracity. Variety consists with the usual and unusual rather than the uniform. Change and progress are constant. Within this ordered movement is intelligence. Everything has been "thought through." The primitive cords of the human heart thrill when we think God's thoughts after him.

True, we have varying success. We learn by mistakes, but what we learn no man taketh from us. How mistaken were our first attempts to study the stars. Egyptian astrology cast men into shadows of superstition about the birth hour, business and outlook on life. Waking from long sleep men ceased to believe the world flat. Astrology was exchanged for astronomy. To-day, in a rickety tower above San Miniato at Florence, you can see the shabby apparatus with which that genius of the

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

heavens, Galileo, toiled to extend our ideas from Ptolemaic to Copernican range. We have escaped, so as by fire, from a narrow world of space.

Penetrating the crust of our planet, geology rose again to say that creation had been going on for millions of years, instead of six days. Our world is older than the trifling item of six thousand years.

Men gathered up the dust of the earth, out of which according to the legend, man was created, and analyzed it. The magic black art of alchemy vanished before scientific chemistry. There is a partly measured, and still measureless meaning, in every pebble of the side-walk. Every atom is eloquent.

The work grew, so that no one man could be an all round scientist. Labor was divided. The astronomer, geologist, zoologist, chemist, biologist, botanist, each in his own line applied himself, made his detour, and returning to report, all spoke the same word in the same breath, "Progress!" Then they said, all science must be progres-

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

sive. Another man came and said, Religion is the queen of the sciences, with a most royal progress. Our ideas of God have been Ptolemaic. They must become Copernican. Once the Divine method appeared mechanical, and we illustrated by the analogy of a machine. Now we know the progress vital, and we illustrate as our Lord, by the "seed," "blade," "ear" and "full corn." Once we considered creation instantaneous, now we know that it is gradual. Waste does not hang so heavily on the heart, when we discover, that in the economy of nature no fragments are lost. Last year's leaf will enrich the soil for next year's harvest. Impure water disappears by evaporation, to be glorified with purity and returned to the earth. The burden of proof lies with the man who claims that the "heedless world" has "lost one accent of the Holy Ghost."

The strong and the weak are often in conflict. There is, in the short run, such a thing as the triumph of brute force. But the struggle for the weak is more mighty

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

than the struggle against the weak. If not the animal world would be self-annihilating, in a brief period. Parental care of offspring, the extended period of human infancy, the foreshadowed cross even in the parental instinct of the lioness, reveal the survival of the weak. On the other hand where the weak go to the wall, they reappear to continue the battle in new forms and on eventually higher levels of power and sacrifice. Mind wins as against matter, brains over the brute, brains and conscience over brains alone. The Christian does not believe that the being, he calls God, has so low intelligence as to make a world, as a man would make a house, then lock the door and throw the key away, obliging himself to work a miracle to get back in again. If we, with our limitations, can by the telescope, the spectroscope, the telegraph, telephone and Marconi devices, somewhat master these enlarged worlds of space and time, how reasonable is it to believe that God is not less able, and to apprehend how he dwells with us, alike at home in the distant star, the

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

microscopic flower and the spirit of man.

Strangely true it is, that for ages God could give the millions no greater light, under the law by which light is imparted, than the light of nature. Nothing was ready-made. All this while he was laying a noble foundation. When your architect sends his building up twenty-five stories, he is careful to send it down, proportionately, below the ground level. So God anticipated no collapse, when millions of years ago, he began the foundation for the "house not made with hands," the full grown Son of God.

In the second place, what light do the Scriptures shed to justify the hope of the optimist? The genius of the Bible is sympathy for mankind. The first verse of Genesis substitutes a personal God for force and many gods. This God creates man in his own likeness. There is one key-note from beginning to end of the sacred parchments, the note of ascending sympathy. Discords exist as incidents to the process of an orchestra becoming attuned. Sin is in

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

the world, but outmatched. The "head" of the serpent is bruised by man, while the "heel" of man escapes with a passing injury. Prosperity of all kinds will overtake the righteous nation. The sinner can be cured, though his sins be "as scarlet."

Surely by this literature we are borne on a rising tide, a stream of prophetic glory. The river of water of life, rising in prehistoric time, widens, deepens, gains momentum and majesty. On its bosom sail vast fleets of hope. It surpasses all the rivers of time, the Nile, fertile mother of nations, the Mississippi opening a continent, an East River or Hudson making market for the world. Follow the stream of the Bible, from the everlasting heights of Moses with God, down by the rich valleys of the Shepherd psalm, through the broad plains, where sword is exchanged for plowshare, by the arid desert where the thorn gives way to the myrtle tree and to the rose. Listen to the beatitudes of Jesus, as they swell the current. Ponder the depth of the river, in the parable of the "Prodigal son," its peace in

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

the "upper room," its unlimited power to turn all the wheels of human life as it falls in the Niagara of the Cross. Behold the ideal of love inspiring Paul to give us his charity chapter, widening into God's ocean of love. The "fruit of the Spirit" grows on the river's bank by the automatic law of Heaven. Verily the Bible is the great charter of human rights, the history of the success of the strong, proving themselves worthily strong, because of their sympathy for the weak.

Abraham, in the day of human sacrifice, spares the life of his son, by reason of a higher thought of God. Follow this trend and it leads to the passing of the Druids, and to the crumbling, at this very moment, of the Temple of Saturn in the Roman Forum. The absolutism of Pharaoh is strong, but not strong enough to keep the Hebrews in bondage. They depart to dwell in a land flowing with democratic ideas and righteousness. Woman ascends from polygamy to monogamy. The pessimist will no longer quote the passage "All is vanity,"

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

because he believes Solomon said it, and that any man with a thousand wives would say something of the sort. Household slavery among the Hebrews was almost dead by the time of Christ.

The Gentiles are to share the privileges of the Jew, said Isaiah. They are on the same level with the Jew, said Christ. The autocratic idea must go. The Son of Man said: "You know that they which are accorded to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, * but it is not so among you." It was not so at Scrooby or Leyden or Plymouth. In the obscure village of Austerfield, England, there is a little Anglican church, where Governor William Bradford, of Plymouth Colony, was baptized. The now sacred font, once discarded and used by the sexton to water his chickens, has been discovered and restored by those who cherish the memory of the noble Pilgrim. In an aisle, restored by Americans, a lawyer and member of that church, living in the adjacent village of Bawtry, has placed these words in bronze: "To Governor William

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

Bradford, the foremost American to bear rule by the free choice of his brethren." Scripture is fulfilled. The poet of the people sings for us, with just such instances in mind."

**"Princes and lords are but the breath of kings
An honest man's the noblest work of God."**

At the beginning of Christ's ministry, he read from the prophet of the exile, that passage he meant to stand for the central feature of his ministry.

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

At the end of his work, he said to his disciples, that they would do, in his name, greater things than he had done. Verily the Scriptures breathe sympathy for all men, especially for the man who is down. Divinity is disclosed as, serving rather than receiving service, saving rather than condemning. Deity prefers to suffer rather than inflict suffering, to forgive rather than punish. The Pharisee is condemned with

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

tears, because he is a man; with severity because of his inhumanity.

The central petition of the Lord's Prayer is, that the "Kingdom" may "come and God's will be done *on Earth* as it is in Heaven." The New Testament closes with a sublime drama of victory. The shout of triumph rises above the din of conflict and the fires of the Roman persecution. How like a mighty tower of defense the Scriptures rise before the vision of the common people. When does a man appear so small as when he stands up beside the Bible and assumes that he can defend it or that it needs his defense!

We can go through the Scriptures and select another line of texts and so arrange them as to make a different impression, that is, upon the unwary. A mosaic of Bible texts, contradicting the genuine import, can be arbitrarily invented. There are many such. Verses torn from their connection, set out in false patterns, have deceived the very elect. The Pretorium has been repaved. Over these cold and cruel pave-

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

ments, they have again led forth our Lord for crucifixion, worse than that of Golgotha, because declared necessary to make, rather than express, Divine sympathy.

From a third point of view, let us note how social progress, since Bible times, has justified the Christian optimist. During the Roman Empire, unwelcome children were exposed under conditions of peculiar horror. When escaping the teeth of dogs, they were sought, that their brains might be used for medicine. The drowning for babes was indeed a happy escape from the world.

Not long since children of tender age were doomed to drag carts in coal pits, harnessed with women. Till Parliament passed a law in their defense, children were driven down hot smoking chimneys by cruel masters. Fewer by far are the sweat shops, where pallid, emaciated, scrofulous and consumptive children labor long hours for a wicked wage.

Once a stranger was an enemy. In Germany, at one time, a year's residence was necessary to defend a tribe against one man.

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

Their proverb ran, "Two nights a guest, three nights a servant."

Before Christ, in a great part of the world, licentiousness was a religion; since Christ, it has become a crime. The home, as an institution, has had a wonderful development. Birth occurs higher and higher on the scale of tendency to righteousness.

Slavery's sun has set. Slaves make good ancestors, if far enough back. Britain, for two hundred and fifty years before William the Conqueror, raised British youth and drove young men and maidens in chains, to be sold in the open market, at port cities like Bristol. The historian, Bancroft, has stated that three and one quarter millions of slaves were taken from Africa by the slave trade in one century, and that of this number two hundred and fifty thousand were thrown to the sharks from the ships, on the way to the colonial plantations.

From the time of Howard and Mrs. Fry, the prisoner has been the constant study of the philanthropist. Formerly confined for life, herded without classification, starved,

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

tortured, and all as a matter of course; now it has been demonstrated that the great majority of criminals can receive an indeterminate sentence and go back to society good citizens.

War, when waged for the excitement of bloodshed, received direction from some strong man, who ruled a limited area, proposing to himself do the plundering otherwise carried on by families. The church set limits to these "private wars." At last they were abolished. The nation confederated the tribes. National alliances checked nations. International law scattered leaves of arbitration for the healing of the world. War changed its motive. The end is a protectorate for childhood peoples. The next step seems to be the establishment of an international Supreme court to still further lessen the chances of war.

Education, formerly possible for a few, is now compulsory for all. Time was when there was one Bible in the community and that chained even for Protestants. Five hundred years of the English Bible, to-

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

gether with the study of every science and art consequent upon the revival of learning, tell their own story. We are informed that the Vatican is publishing an edition of the Bible for popular use. The little red school house has dug the grave of superstition. It has a right to be red. It has cost blood. Is it too much to hope that such men as Archbishop Ireland will help put the Bible back on the school teacher's desk?

With the rise of the people, governments have changed. They have no divine right save the right to secure the welfare of the governed. National governments the world over have become more representative. The barons still stand around King John of tardy pen, crying, "Sign, sign the charter!" King Charles still has his Cromwell. George the Third his Washington. The lamented McKinley called attention to the fact, that the only time Washington formally spoke before the Constitutional Convention, over which he presided, was when he successfully appealed to the delegates for a "larger representation of the people in the National

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

House of Representatives." On the Janiculum Hill, overlooking Rome and the Vatican, stands the equestrian statue of Garibaldi. The feet of the war horse are firmly braced. The general imparts his spirit to the steed, seeming to say, "Here I stand and here I will remain!" On the side of the pedestal is an allegorical group representing America. Columbia, attended by Mercury of the winged feet, is saying, "Carry this message and motto to Italy and to the world, 'The state forever without a church, but never without a religion.' "

Survey industrial conditions. The prisoner of war met death because there was no work for him to do. Later he went to the mines, the galleys and the fields. When freed from sale, he yet could own no land. Escaping serfdom, he gained a small wage for long hours. Wages rose. Thrift made him a capitalist. Toil and slow progress are attended with birth pangs. Men, of the strenuous life, seek by gradual rather than revolutionary processes, to protect the weak and make them strong, to capture the Rob

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

Roy of industry at the point where his injustice checks industry, and threatens the public welfare.

The golden rule is working better. The weal of all on Earth, not the welfare of a remnant hereafter, is our goal. No man is to be thrown down. All are to be lifted up. The task is difficult, but rewarding. Fewer put on brakes while we are going up hill.

Doubtless when the report of Moses' death was at last believed, men said, "There never will be another man like Moses." But Abraham Lincoln was much like him. The disciples of John the Baptist no doubt said, "There will never be another." Savonarola, Carlyle and John Brown of Harper's Ferry look after that succession. Chrysostum, of the silver tongue, left a vacancy that was never to be filled, till Parker, Brooks and Beecher came. Such as Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson and Hawthorne make good substitutes for Dryden and Byron, Fielding and Smollet. Ian McLaren has added to Scotch literature a keen appreciation of the religious ele-

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

ment not found even in Walter Scott, thus connecting beauty with truth and nature with God.

Today, in Venice, the people are sad because the Campanile has fallen. That beautiful shaft, of three hundred feet, guarded cathedral and palace for nine hundred years. The chimes rang joyfully to salute the sun as his first ray kissed the angel on the summit; and his last said a sweet good-night to the Adriatic queen. The muse of architecture today, mourns amid the "Stones of Venice" powerless to toll the wonted bells of grief. Men shake their heads and say, "All Venice is falling and there will never be another Campanile!"

Nay! Not so. Look yonder. "Alps on Alps arise." Things are never so bad, but that they can always be better. Human life, character, skill and capacity are in their infancy. Art is being popularized. The useless will find use. Ugliness turns to beauty. The weak becomes strong. The strong true. There is to be a better Venice, a nobler Campanile.

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

Note a quiet and deep growth toward unity of human feeling. Beneath the distinctions of race, color, climate, condition and creed, brotherhood seeks to answer the last petition of Christ for unity. This spirit is to wipe out what remains of the line between mass and class. Sects will continue to be born again into their higher and profounder agreements. Science and religion will find their interests identified with the development of the whole man. All barbarous antagonisms and vestiges of animal cunning will fade away.

Less and less do we hear men crying for the "good old times;" times when banks were holes in the ground, when wealth was never active, save when building a palace for a king, or when the people were eager to erect a cathedral, for joy that the year one thousand came, without the ending of the world by fire and brimstone.

Who asks to have again the day of Pompeii, whose wall-paintings can not be shown to women; the day when the vestal virgin cried "thumbs down" and the sand of

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

the Colosseum was stained with martyr's blood. When in Rome, let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves, where the full moon rises above the roofless rim of the Vespasian amphitheatre. In this arena, numberless Christians hastened the rise of Christianity from the catacomb to the palace. Here, dying like gods, they defied the emperor and made death a greater pastime than they furnished to the "glutted eyes of Rome's proud populace." Do you ever sing? This is the place and this the time for hymns; and if for one, that one shall be, "All hail the power of Jesus' Name."

Oh, yes! Restore the olden day of the inquisition and ingenuity of horror. Get court evidence by the "ordeal of fire." Dig deep pits and put poisonous serpents in them, to sport with human beings. Bring back the rack, the fagot and wheel, the gridiron and boiling oil. Let us have holocaust and black death, witch-craft and ascetic rigors. Perhaps there is a man present who wants a half-holiday of this kind for himself and family.

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

If the social reincarnation of Jesus has wrought such changes in the dispositions of men, we shall not be surprised, as we pass on, to discover that our ideas also have changed for the better. Right thinking has advanced. We honor the "heretics of yesterday," Luther, Knox, Bruno, Huss. They were not heretics, but only called such. The real heretic is the pessimist. The Gnostic said, God is too good to touch the world. The Manichee said, The world is corrupt. Sin he declared a disease, not an act of will. Generation was in his view iniquity, regeneration impossible, and the world hopelessly damned. Augustine, after all due credit is allowed him, was stained through with these mediaeval dyes. His world was lost. Adam fell from the summit of all good to the bottom of all evil, and took with him every member of the race. God was more than just, in consenting to save a few by divine decree, without the slightest reference to their character. This was done out of regard for Jesus Christ, not for man. This regard for Christ was conveyed to the

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

knowledge of the elect, not directly, but by a succession of agencies, desirable to break the shock of even this alleged mercy. The priest, the saint, the virgin, the Christ, and at last, so as by fire, the Almighty condescended. It is not hard to see how the law took the place of vital creed. There were priests, but not a prophet whose life was safe. God was absent, the clergy present. A deposit of grace, transferred by specific conveyance through some intermediate agency, took the place of coming to him who never casts out. Tradition expels Scripture and reason. Salvation was defined as safety from future fire, and considered far more desirable than character here. The secular was unholy. The people, who then believed these things, were pessimists of course, but if one believes them now, we have no word left to describe him. He is a Pessimist, let us say, with a capital P. Such a one may believe that hell is a literal place of fire and brimstone, will turn his back on the noble teachings of Jesus, which employs fire as the symbol of purification and never as a symbol

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

of torture. He will only escape, from his sad state of mind, when he learns that our Lord taught that to get a man out of hell, we have only to get hell out of the man.

“Well, how about Calvin?” He escaped from the spiritual despotism of his age. He hit on the Scriptures as our guide. So far he was right. But the Scriptures, rightly understood, correct Calvin. All honor to the man who, had he been less stern, save in the matter of Servetus, we had been less free. But he carried over into Protestantism many an error of Augustine. He, too, unwittingly slandered Adam. But to the testimony. What do the four gospels say about Adam? Not a word. Jesus is absolutely silent on the point which is made the strong staple on which Calvin and Augustine hang their systems. Going back to the Old Testament, there is no word of recognition for Adam, save in Genesis. If we had found the same story of a serpent and forbidden fruit anywhere else, we should have said, It is a parable with a moral like the parables of Christ himself. Take up the Acts and Epistles;

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

silence reigns in John's letters, in those of Peter, in Paul in every book except one, and in every chapter of that book except one, and there he is illustrating, as an evangelist, for Jews, saying, If, as ye believe, all died in Adam, know that salvation is designed to extend as far as the curse. These innocent words of Paul have got into bad company. Pessimists can go to heaven, but does it not become pretty clear that they will have to *back in?* Surely "Every man is a sinner," but what about the profounder truth, that "Every sinner is a man?"

No one shall outdo me in emphasis of the sovereignty of God, the responsibility and accountability of man and the redemption of the race. These were the great fundamental doctrines of the fathers which we have developed. We have only honor for Pilgrim, Puritan, Covenanter and Huguenot. They nobly served their generation. Of what solid oak were they. After the first cruel winter, half their number dead, Bradford could write, "No one went back in the Mayflower." They forsook their Egypt, not

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

fearing the wrath of the Stuart king, and "endured as seeing him who is invisible." Pass by the skull and cross bones on their tombs. According to their light the Pilgrims were the children of joy. When re-embarking at Southampton, the crowd made merry over their plain clothing and dialect. They were said in derision to be going to America to "sing psalms through their noses and to live among salvages." They walked by faith, not by sight. The men of sight are pessimists. The men of faith are optimists. In every great enterprise the son of despondency will say, "Do it not." The son of hope will say, "I can and I will." Call them visionaries and men of dreams, but God will put them in the calendar which extends the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. They are approved watchmen on the walls of Zion—ever crying with the true reformer, "The morning star! The morning star!"

The last witness we may call the life of God in the soul. Society rests on its units. "The hope of glory here or hereafter is Christ in us," as individuals. Today the

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

Christian met defeat, but he has enlisted for a campaign, not a single engagement. His company is not the corps or the division or the army. To lose courage we have only to identify a part with the whole. One kind of weapon may fail, but there is a full armory.

The individual faces a threefold situation. First there is the grade where hope is feeble, and requires strong stimulus. Then we have a second range where a moderate exercise of happy anticipation may be obtained by a moderate stimulus. Third, the self-kindling range of courage for the future marks the highest type. All the excitements, by which God stimulates men to advance, have their place, however mixed with human infirmity. We have organization, knowledge, creed, liturgy, business, useful and fine arts, literature, journalism, philanthropy, religious zeal. All these excitements fail without that love which the Gospel inspires. If organization had been sufficient, the Roman church would have converted the world long ago. The victory of righteousness is won, not by might nor by power, but by the spirit

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

of God in his world. The mainspring of the world's momentum is the loving, sovereign God. "Thou art our Father though Abraham knoweth us not." The benevolent purpose of God, in earliest creation, notes the latest sparrow's fall. God sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied. "The whole creation groans," but "he that hath subjected the same in hope," "not willingly," slumbers not. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." It is easy for animal spirit to overflow, but to know the evil of the world, and looking beyond it, ever to rejoice, that is the attainment of the full grown man.

The righteous cause is delayed, but not defeated. Progress is not made by a straight line. Rather, like the spiral railroad tunnel of St. Gotthard, it turns backward on itself while rising within the dark mountain. Now and then the train passes out on some favoring ledge, to still ascend, only to be again driven within the mountain, forging upward till the full and open vision of the mountain height breaks upon the view.

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

Progress is sure like the general course of a ship which winds compel to tack—

"Fear not each sudden sound and shock,
'Tis of the wave and not the rock."

Of what use is it to support the ark, when it can support itself?

"You may as well go stand upon the beach
And bid the main flood bate its usual height,
You may as well use question with the wolf
Why she hath made the ewe bleat for her lamb,
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops and make a noise,
When they are fretted with the gusts of Heaven."

as seek to prevent the ultimate victory of Almighty God.

The hope of the believer rests in no surface feeling. It is no specialization of desire. It is the joy of living in a world of rich experience and magnificent forecast. The whole world lies at his feet. Rome brings organization. Art comes from Greece with philosophy. Mind, dominant over matter, is the gift of Asia. Conscience was the key-note with Israel. Germany, Holland and Britain stand for liberty. America attempts to fuse them all in a holy service of brotherhood. The vision of Paul, mak-

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

ing Christianity the assimilator of all good, regarding "whatsoever" is "true" or "honest" or "pure" or "lovely or of good report," is best fulfilled in a land of world-wide welcome. America is, of all nations, nearest to the test. There are exclusions and compromises, but the tares are in the wheat, not the wheat in the tares. Outlook is based on no selfish Heaven, but eternal life in the present tense. The secret of a happy life is to get into the currents of God. Here is summer in the soul, expelling the "winter of our discontent," interpreting all permitted evil, as having in it the characteristic and primary mercy of God. They who complain, because they have been pushed aside by those who "strive and cry," may well take heart. They who "stand and wait" are God's reserves. "They also serve." Two worlds will realize what one world can not.

"Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill
To pangs of nature, sins of will
Defects of doubt and taints of blood."

CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM.

Standing where the two worlds meet is the Cross of Christ. By that God has sworn that he will bring men up out of prison and poorhouse, out of hospital and tenement, out of sin and ignorance. By the groans and tears of Jesus, by his scourging and bitter death, the word has gone forth, that God is everlastingly committed to fight man's battle with him, but not for him. There can be no bitterness in mystery whose heart is sacrifice. The Earth shall behold that bright hour of which prophets speak and poets sing. "The desert shall blossom as the rose." "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the Earth, as the waters cover the sea." Hail to him, who rideth forth to victory, having on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords!"

III.

GAINING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."—I. John IV: 7, 8.

"There are hours, and they come to us all at some period of life or other, when the hand of mystery seems to lie heavy on the soul—when some life shock scatters existence, and leaves it a blank and dreary waste henceforth forever, and there appears nothing of hope in all the expanse which stretches out, except that merciful gate of death which opens at the end—hours when the sense of misplaced or ill-requited affection, the feeling of personal worthlessness, the uncertainty and meanness of all human aims, and the doubt of all human goodness, unfix the soul from all its old moorings, and leave it drifting, drifting over the vast infinitude with an awful sense of solitariness. Then the man whose faith rested on outward authority and not on inward life, will find it give way: the authority of the priest, the authority of the church, or merely the authority of a document proved by miracles and backed by prophecy, the soul, conscious life hereafter, God, will be an awful desolate perhaps. Well, in such moments you doubt all—whether Christianity be true: whether Christ was man, or God, or beautiful fable. You ask bitterly, like Pontius Pilate, What is truth? In such an hour, what remains? I reply, obedience. Leave those thoughts for the present. Act—be merciful and gentle—honest; force yourself to abound in little services; try to do good to others; be true to the duty that you know. *That* must be right, whatever else is uncertain. And by all the laws of the human heart, by the word of God, you shall not be left in doubt. Do that much of the will of God which is plain to you, and you shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."—*Fred W. Robertson, Obedience the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge.*

III.

GAINING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."—
Matthew V: 8.

THERE are two kinds of truth, physical and moral. The best knowledge concerns moral sense. This is the knowledge of God, because he must give final significance to the real world and to the world at its best.

Moral truth also falls into a two-fold division. These ideas, as they concern God, are a catalogue of his various attributes and direct knowledge of his disposition. The character or disposition of God is the chief human interest. Men have asked for bread and have been given a stone by all not in sympathy with this distinction. The feeling of the victims of disappointment is,

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

"Away with the sawdust which masks as meal; tell me, if you can, how you know a God who cares for me." Our Lord sought to do just that. His Sermon on the Mount has, as its salient feature, the call of men to blessedness. Beatitude after beatitude form introduction to this statement of Jesus, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." He has been saying that the Kingdom of Heaven is for the humble, comfort for the sad, control of the Earth for the spiritual and that satisfaction awaits aspiration. The merciful find mercy. Then he evidently thought, My hearers shall not think that I am a sentimentalist, substituting confectionery for food. I must proclaim that fundamental law of the spiritual realm, which underlies every virtue. They must not for a moment suppose that these sayings of mine are a row of beautiful pearls strung on a string of chance association. The fundamental law of all spiritual progress is thus given in the introduction to his sermon. By purity of moral life comes clarity of moral vision. Jesus forsakes the path of the teacher

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

who is content with conformity to rule. He is not even willing to select a virtue from any genuine life. He goes deeper and declares that all advance in the righteousness of the Kingdom, is in exact ratio to, and absolutely dependent upon, fundamental heart quality. All character so won is real, divine, and so far as it goes, a vision of Deity. The joy of the beatitude consists, not so much in the completeness of the divine vision, in any given moment and instance, as in the discovery of the process by which we advance.

Let us examine the pathfinder of the spirit and consider its separate elements. First, there is receptivity, willingness of mind, openness of temper, thorough going honesty, a truth loving disposition. The ingenuous spirit is in love with reality, whatever its origin. The teachable pupil can learn.

As a youth Jesus had a rare acquaintance with the great men of Israel, derived from the instruction of his parents, the synagogue school at Nazareth, and his reading of the "law and the prophets." He drank in the

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

majesty and grandeur of the Old Testament literature. With this background of veneration, he was to associate the more filial and affectionate qualities. He had, on a very much higher plane, the universal element suggested in Milton and Dante. Love was not mere sentimentality with him, because it was set against a background of power. With this training came that respect and love due to the noble in the past. Those who prayed to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, stood on a level with the American who reserves a sacred precinct in his soul for the memory of Washington, Sumner and Lincoln. If there are those among us who have lost, or who have yet to gain respect for our national heroes, let us trust that their number is small. They may protest that they are not hero-worshippers. And how can they be, since they worship themselves?

It is not contended that a man is never to have another chance, because he makes an honest, but mistaken endeavor to have the scope of the senses greater than their Maker

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

designed. The scientific skeptic does not smell with his eye or hear with his tongue, however much he may deny in terms the possession of a spiritual sight, hearing and taste. There is more truth beneath the gibe that an "Honest God is the noblest work of man," than the skeptic discerns. Blessed is the honest man, for he will recognize honesty. "Blessed are the pure in heart," for the quality of the lens determines the result of the observation. This is the only method of knowing God. There can be no rational objection to it. This Divine method is employed when our higher experiences interpret God. The method is abused when we follow the practice of barbaric days, and derive ideas of God from our lower experiences. Real knowledge will be as free as possible from the artificial, external and purely material sources.

Again men fear to trust reason, even when a servant of the moral sense. They have demanded a deposit of grace and authority, which takes from man all responsibility for knowing God or access to him. The

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Church, the succeeding representatives of an original vicar of Christ, holds a supposed deposit, which dispenses with earnest search for truth in the spiritual realm. The churchman and the agnostic usually agree in giving up the problems of the spirit. The churchman turns the problem over to the Church. The agnostic is prone to give it up as insoluble. Light dawns when we recognize the difference between a revelation in and a conveyance to the soul. The knowledge of God's character is obtained through our higher nature, under the law of growth, and on the principle that like understands like. With this agrees our study of comparative religion and national development. Here is the key to the Divine evolution, which includes both the Old and New Testament histories. The law recurs in a thousand changing forms of narrative and parable, proverb and song, familiar epistle and drama, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

A second element, involved in this law of vision, is the appropriation of the presence

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

of God. This was the habit of select spirits before Christ. A noble expression of this faith is found in the one hundred and thirty-ninth psalm:

"If I ascend into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in the grave, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me."

If only one be not insulated against God, if the heart is not a wilful vacuum, God, who is atmospheric, finds conscious residence. So also Wordsworth sang in the Lake Country.

"I have felt a presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things."

Some here this morning will soon be in the mountains or by the shore. We may find ourselves on the Gorner Grat where the sun, opening the gates of day, gilds the Matterhorn with glory. By forest and stream, in garden and farm, through mountain pass, in the gallery of art, by cottage

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

and hedgerow, we can behold the garments of God, and discern him who dwells just within the beautiful in art and nature.

Still the vision of power comes from within, not from without, not even from the flowers and the field. The inner revelation is our citadel against the terror of nature, in some of her moods. God is in the still small voice, not in the storm and avalanche. Elijah's experience is an epitome of that of the race. God does not ignore our mood but can meet us on the level of it, and by the exaggeration, we are impressed with the contrasting reality and duty. The soul becomes calm. The image of God reflects his presence. God's self-expression, "the Word," was gradually and continually developing a sense of God in man, long before "the Word became flesh." The process was adjusted to the idea that his children could not conceive of anything wholly unlike their experience. When man seemed to be trying to transcend this limitation, he failed. He made a centaur, half man, half beast, fragments of experience joined. The early lessons in the lore of

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Divinity found men calling God a lion or some strong creature of the jungle. Men were children of the chase. Women were Amazons of war. Judges were Samsons, men of brawn, ancient prize fighters. They could interpret the law with the jawbone of an ass. Men became pastoral, and God was a shepherd. They tilled the soil and God was a husbandman. They became wealthy, sought strong government and God was a king. The arts flourished and they saw the King in his beauty, the beauty of holiness. The family flourished and God was a Father. God is called "Father" six times in the Old Testament and three hundred times in the New, because our capacity to know God increased. We anticipate, then recognize the Daysman. Hopes are aroused and realized. Prophets and philosophers join in asserting necessity for "A God or a God inspired man to teach us our religious duties and take away the darkness from our eyes." He came. God's revelation of his character in Jesus Christ was the Word made Flesh. God and man are revealed by God in man.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

Grandeur is carried up to service and sacrifice. Fear, conscience, beauty are born again for the race. Still, his own received him not. The Jew continued to say that God loves only the Jew. The ecclesiastic limited God's interest to the church. The people of the reformed faith declared God's interest confined to the elect. It is now pretty well understood that God loves us all.

Luke introduces us to Simon, a Pharisee, who invited the Lord to dine. Unbidden guests, according to the free ways of the Orient, followed the more honored guests, as spectators. They sauntered leisurely in the open courts and stood by the table couches, enjoying the cheer of the feast. As the festivities lengthened, the crowd grew. A woman, bankrupt in character and reputation, stood near the couch where our Lord reclined, with his feet turned backward. She was near enough to see and be seen. She has a partial view of his face and can distinctly hear his words. Behold her, wistful, sad, gazing into vacancy. Perhaps she

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

once had lived in the country and had drifted into the city with a caravan. There is something in the great guest reminding her of the old mountain home. The pure days of her happy girlhood come again in day dream. Though apparently unconscious of her presence, the rich intonation of the Lord's voice plays upon her spirit as aeolian harp strings touched by invisible fingers. She knows that the prophet is not here as a guest of love. Curiosity and investigation are in the air. The host had neglected the common courtesy to guests of providing water for the Master's feet. She notes the neglect and quietly stoops to remove the dust with her hair. Finding the attention welcomed, she covers those feet with kisses and with ointment, which, had they been those of a Pharisee, would have been used to spurn her, What impression does this affair make on the host?

"Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth him, that she is a sinner. And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. A certain lender had two

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

debtors: the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them, therefore, will love him most? Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. * * Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

That which made this incident possible, was precisely what made Jesus a prophet. Yea, more than a prophet.

Verily a man can take the Scripture record and find all he needs to bring him into higher personal relation with God. He needs no capital save his own need. He may say to himself, I need God. God would be Satan to make that need on purpose to disappoint me. I take the New Testament as any other book. It satisfies, by its guidance, all the wants of my soul. Therefore, I have found God.

The Holy Spirit has at last abundant material for motive in the life and teachings of Christ. With this inspiration our conception of the Christ grows from a star to a sun

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

at dawn, and then a mid-day glory. The laws of the spiritual realm become more clear. The prophet outruns the priest. The gown is forgotten because not a badge of service but a badge of office. The adjustment of the Spirit to human life is sublime. God takes man where he is and develops him.

The law of gravitation is surely not more clear than this fundamental law of Christianity. Consider Newton beneath an apple-tree. He observes an apple, a fact; a falling apple, a force. He concludes that any body of the same weight, whatever the distance, will follow the same law, the details of which he can later work out by experiment. Now then, for our food or medicine, as the case may be. A good man, a fact; another man associating with him finds that he is growing better, in direct ratio to fellowship, a force. Let any man do likewise and he will gain a like result, a law. Apply the same process to religious thought. Jesus the good will be found better, the better will prove the best, the unique a hand reached

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

down from Heaven, not another guess about Heaven. Thus it becomes evident that the pure heart is progressive, and in time opens all doors of character and religious thought. This is the simple and profound solvent for the simplest duty of today, and for the speculations of the seventh Heaven about the eighth.

But does the man believe correctly about everything? Not at all. His practical theology will improve under that treatment. What is theology? Knowledge of God. How is it obtained? From the service of God. How is the service rendered? By vital relations with living men. But how does a man know God? Just as he knows his brother, except that in the case of God there is no bodily and sensuous aid. I know you because I have heard you speak. I have seen you make a gesture. Performing an act of memory, I interpret you. There is one thread. Another and another follow, till we have woven the warp and woof of friendship.

God is truth carried up by faith, personi-

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

fied and then brought down in sympathy. How do we get this truth? The Jew said by study. But Christ said act. Train the will and the affections, then will the mind become clarified.

"Ye search the Scriptures, because in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify concerning Me, but ye will not come to Me that ye might have life."

How shall we know the qualities of the Christ? On sight. This is a sight draft. Is the flower beautiful? Hold it up. Would you prove that the symphony is sweet? Play it.

Third—The Spirit of God helps our progress, disclosing himself to us in our human service. This is eminently the age of humanity. We are discovering the humanity of God and the dignity of man. Over the door of one of the buildings belonging to Glasgow University, a few years ago one might have seen the words, "The Humanities." At the beginning of the revival of learning, that chair stood for Latin, one of the first concessions for general study. Now we have compulsory education for humanity.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

In America we put a school house where feudalism put a castle. The best literature at one's own price is sown broadcast. Nearly two hundred editions, not reprints, of the works of Robert Burns have appeared during the last one hundred years. Why this demand? The secret largely lies in the lines,

"For a' that an' a' that
It's coming yet, for a' that
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brithers be for a' that."

This is only another form of "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." This spirit is that which forecasts our destiny. It will make every heart a temple, every home a Bethany, every land a holy land, every stream a Jordan, every good a sacrament and every benefactor a missionary. The phrase "foreign missionary" is unfortunate. What are called "foreign missions" constitute a vast human movement. The goal is nothing alien to man, but includes every creature. America, like Israel, is an elect nation to elect the world. The spirit of God is the Holy Spirit because he has undertaken the

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

emancipation of Humanity. The secular is sacred. Sects surrender their hatreds to the coming Kingdom of Love. Who is there even now who will volunteer to number the cloud of witnesses?

Christianity, as never before, is inspiring science and art. Music, poetry, painting, sculpture are freer, since the highest themes are Christian. The modern city is the nerve center. Every live man feels the pulse and throb of its life. The thickest of the fight is not far to find. For all there is a hard fought field at hand. About the issue, there can be no doubt. The race is redeemed. We are not the "just made perfect," but there is an availing struggle for justice. About us are the signs of a conflict not soon to end for society. It is the finest of the fine arts to learn how to live together, with malice toward none, and justice for all. There is to be no partiality or respect of persons. Justice has her eyes of prejudice blindfolded while she holds the scales. Better laws, recognizing that disputes have two sides in the matter of the rights of labor

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

and capital, are sure to find enforcement and result in public protection. Neither labor union or trust can be a law unto itself. It is not simply a question which of two disputants is right in any contest. There is the profounder fact that we are all bound together in a vast human ascent. Individuals are summoned aside, but the militant kingdom abides, perennial, prevailing.

We shall soon hear the summons, as individuals, to throng the steps of light. Past the flashing gates, we can go with ten thousand times ten thousand, rejoicing to find Humanity saved indeed. There one vision of our Lord, now revealing his goodness and veiling his glory, will justify all cost, and instant welcome will be endless joy.

IV.

THE VALUE OF MAN.

"But the conception of man has changed as well as that of God. We may without extravagance say that man had never come by his rights in religion; for either, when God was great and of infinite majesty he had been humbled into the dust; or, where God was very terrible he had been degraded into an instrument that could be broken and cast away, or depraved into a coward who would offer the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul; or, where God was complaisant, he had taken him into his own hands and done with him as he pleased. To find a fit relation or a seeming equilibrium between God and man is a thing hard enough to be esteemed impossible, yet this was what Christ achieved. He made man stand upright before God, conscious of his dignity. It does not become a being of infinite promise to lie prone in the dust, even before the Infinite Majesty. To feel what it is to be the Eternal Father's son, is to learn to behave as a son, possessed of his privileges as well as bound by his duties; and it is also to feel that all sons are equal in their potential, though not perhaps in their realized worth. Hence, the Christian idea created two novel notions as to man: the value of the unit and the unity of the race."—*Andrew Martin Fairbairn, D. D. L. L. D. The Philosophy of the Christian Religion, p. 644.*

"It is quite possible that through our very failure to enter into God's own deep reverence for the person, in the recognition of man's divinely given individuality, as well as through failure to recognize the essential likemindedness of men, we have been shutting the door of hope, where God has not shut it, and have limited beyond warrant the divine mercy. Even in the life of heaven men cannot be all alike. "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand."—*Rev. Henry Churchill King, D. D., Theology and the Social Consciousness. p. p. 245-246.*

IV.

THE VALUE OF MAN.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.

R. V. Ps. 8: 4, 5.

THE psalmist's song is about man's dignity. He sees the dawn of the day of man's power over all nature. The consciousness of being a man, not a sheep or an ox or a beast of the field or some creature of the ocean, wakes the poet's heart. He sees man as the king of the earth. He wears a crown placed on him by the King of kings. Nature is subject to him, as he himself is subject only to God. He is no menial subordinate, but one honored in rank and responsibility. He is made but little lower than God, and crowned with glory and

THE VALUE OF MAN.

honor. A true sense of his dignity as a man, leads the poet, up from thought of himself, to the adoration of God, saying, "Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth."

The singer of this old song had a good idea of man's supremacy over sheep and oxen, the finny tribe and the fowl of the air, but with how much more inspiration could he invoke his muse today. Franklin has put the lightning in our hands. Stevenson has given us the locomotive. Whitney left the legacy of the cotton gin. Modern life is rich with ten thousand inventors and inventions. Man's increase of dominion over the forces of nature has no assignable limit. He began with the simple contract of naming a few of the larger animals, probably on the ding dong theory of the sound they were heard to make, so that they may be said almost to have named themselves. Now the makers of dictionaries, with all their enterprise, cannot keep pace with science. What was absurd yesterday is the attainment of today, Opacity is conquered.

THE VALUE OF MAN.

That clever little "fowl of the air," whom the psalmist may have seen putting his ear to a tree to listen for its prey, is surpassed by the cathode ray revealing the worm. The hawk, with keen vision, discovers a distant object, where man's unaided eye fails, but man invents the telescope which brings nigh the very stars.

Mastery of nature, by the supremacy of mind, is but the beginning of wonders. All attainments, brilliant as they are, and the half has not been hinted, are child's play to the service that they are destined to render to the spiritual nature. God has given man a conscience as well as brains. The dignity of man is seen in the part which conscience plays in history. The early promise of prosperity to the nation keeping the moral law, can be traced in all the happier fortunes of man. Penalties have sometimes been delayed. The full reward has not been immediate. God has been patient and deliberate. Prosperous nations will discover that their prosperity rests on their obedience to the moral law.

THE VALUE OF MAN.

The nations of antiquity might have maintained some degree of undisturbed barbarism, but for the low ambition of their kings. Given over to conquest and luxury, they fell a prey to their own vice. Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria, Persia, Israel, Greece, Rome, tottered and fell. Over their grave is written one concise epitaph: "The name of the wicked shall rot." Wealth, law, art, culture could not save them as nations. The moral dignity of man is held before us by the lives of men, whom the world calls prophets. These men were not chiefly remarkable for prediction. They did not become prophets by ecclesiastical method or palmistry. They recognized the moral law as the voice of God, and obeyed the voice. They were often able to say things which others only saw. They differed among themselves, as star from star, but their glory was not essentially different from that of any man who is really trying to hear the word of God in his soul. We are slow to realize this idea, but it is getting quite a strong hold upon the world.

THE VALUE OF MAN.

When a given national life rises high enough, their poets rank among the prophets. We find it hard to make a distinct and distant order which leaves out of the prophetic roll great modern men. They do not get nearer God or man, by supposing that Isaiah, David, Jeremiah and others, belong to another order of being. The author of Job has given us the sunshine and shadow of his own sublimely human experience. It is more than likely that he was one, who was more than his property, stronger than his enemies and true to his God. There is great gain for humanity, when it is discovered, that not all the major prophets are in the Bible, nor all the minor prophets out of it. What reality life has, when one begins to really believe that all the prophets were not Hebrews. Every man is a prophet in his degree. If he can understand Isaiah, there must be something in common. Inspiration admits of degree. Religious instruction is founded on experience. The world for sometime yet, will go on repeating its old delusion that mankind is divided into prophets,

THE VALUE OF MAN.

priests, kings and common folks. In the beginning it was not so. It will not be so at last. Every man's dignity will be seen to contain these three sacred functions. He will be a prophet, because he has put moral truth into practice. He will be a priest, because any man who practices righteousness, is a medium of help to his brother. He will be a king, because there is no other essential royalty than to be a true man, and to be a true man one must have that royalty which man's maker inspires.

Additional gifts will be cause for thanksgiving, but they find honor only when their possessors recognize their duty to mankind. That fine quotation from the German poet, that exquisite song, that handsome face, those jewels, that dividend you wish to declare, that raise of salary, that office in the gift of the people, are all nothing, unless founded on a paramount and dominant purpose to promote the highest welfare of all men. They can luridly reveal the life you might have led. They may sadly disclose the crumbling glory of a great nature. The

THE VALUE OF MAN

dignity of man, like the former beauty of an old abbey, is often seen in its ruins. The treacherous mantling ivy of vanity fastening on the old castle wall, will drag it down to the very earth, unless some lover of the beautiful makes a speedy restoration. For every diamond a woman wears, let her wear ten diamonds in her soul. We may not neglect a proper attention to the exterior, but one can in the moral sphere far more readily than in the sphere of household taste, put a ten cent picture in a ten dollar frame. A sincere popular preacher, who lives first and preaches second, or rather preaches by his whole life, may show occasional crudity of expression, but this all must grant, that he does not fall into the worse error of a false heart content with animated art for art's sake.

The special testimony of Scripture is everywhere for the great value of the soul. The Book of Beginnings declares man made in the image of God. Moses sees a great future in a nation of slaves. He conceived the idea that all the Lord's people may have the

THE VALUE OF MAN.

hidden gift of prophecy. Observe this ray of light from the times of barbarism.

“And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men answered and said, My Lord Moses, forbid them! And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.” Isaiah, feeling that men were losing self-respect in abject confession and on constantly bended knees of sin-consciousness and spiritual pauperism calls out in the name of the Lord, “Stand upon thy feet and I will speak to thee.” In the book of Job, we are told that “There is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.” In the Proverbs we are informed that “The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.” Passing on to the words of Christ we detect the same vein cropping out in his treatment of the child. The very babes, which, political economy of

THE VALUE OF MAN.

the selfish order must decide to be a burden, have a divine dignity. This little non-producer is the germ of a great soul. We have often read the passage which contains the statement that it were better that a mill-stone be hung around a man's neck, and that he be drowned in the sea, than that he should cause a little child to stumble. The King James translation is very mild. The following is nearer to the original. It were better that no ordinary mill-stone, such as can be turned by hand, but one so heavy that it would require an ass to turn it, be hanged about the neck, and that such one were drowned, not in ordinarily deep water, but far out and away in the ocean's depth. That is a matter to keep in mind at the spring election, if we believe that temperance and other questions have to do with the welfare of our children and youth.

On the other hand there is the far more important truth that our lives are not made by laws. Our youth are to become heroes, not by removing temptation so much as empowering them to overcome it. The main em-

THE VALUE OF MAN.

phasis is on the ability, nobility and knight-hood of Christian manliness. The incidental and inevitable stress is on sweeter manners and purer laws and protection for the weak who have been saved from sentimentalism and the disposition to charge their sins upon their circumstances rather than to themselves.

The Jewish authorities denied the right of Christ to teach them. He was accustomed to give the laws of Moses a larger meaning than was acceptable to the rabbis. They challenged him on a certain sabbath, accusing him of breaking the sabbath law, by allowing the disciples to thrash wheat. The offense was robbing the kernels out of chaff as they passed through a field of grain, plucking the heads and eating as they walked.

"But said he unto them, have ye not read what David did when he was hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were him, but only for the

THE VALUE OF MAN.

priests? Or have ye not read in the Law, how that on the sabbath days, the priests in the temple profane the sabbath and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is *one* greater than the temple."

How clearly is here set forth the appeal of Jesus from all externalism to the intrinsic worth of the soul. Nothing has value in itself. No temple, picture, marble, drama, essay. All must kneel to the shrine of human benefit. The member is not for the church, the ordinance or the creed or the sabbath day, but all are for him. The little child is greater than all the temples and altars and holy implements.

Whenever art has supplemented nature, it's success consists in its value to men. It is not in any of its many departments an end in itself, but stands or falls before the question, does it benefit man? The most admirable art can not find an end in itself. That surpassing structure of antiquity, the temple of Herod, combined excellence of finish, richness of decoration, stability of structure, grandeur of impression. All the world had

THE VALUE OF MAN.

contributed to that splendor. With all the glory of race associations the temple stood surrounded and filled with men who were proud to live for it, to rehearse its laws and traditions. It was the incarnation of all the Jew held dear. Approaching Jerusalem in the morning from the east, the temple stood pure white and radiant in the sun. And small wonder that a building surpassing the Greek Acropolis, should occupy so high a place in the mind of a nation bound up with the memories of ages past, and sacred prophecies for ages to come. Nevertheless Christ said "In this place," that is in this wheat-field, "is one greater than the temple." Wherever there is any work of righteousness, mercy and justice, in the wheat-field, the blacksmith shop, the dairy, the hospital, the street car, the kitchen or the parlor there is liberty. The deed gives value to the day. He struck this staggering blow for the dignity and liberty of his disciples. All external to the soul receives importance from its serving power. Above all forms, organizations, observances, sacra-

THE VALUE OF MAN.

ments, stands man, the individual man. The Jew reversed this Divine order. He thought on new moons and feasts. Christ thought of man. He thought of man as walking beneath the smile of God, reaching out on every side and commanding the service of everything which can aid the ascent of man. If on the way up the steep there is a temple, the Bible, a prayer book, a sermon, a meeting that can help us, we use it. The value of church organization is in itself nothing. Instrumentally it may be invaluable. It is not something to join or be lost, not a chain to restrain our liberties. It may be a hammer to break our chains. It is not an institution to block out all our time, but an inspiration aiding us to block it out ourselves. Man is greater than any sacrament or custom. A church ceases to be Christian when it ceases to defend Christian liberty.

The church can not serve man if it turns into a club. All that is human must have a fascination for the church of Jesus Christ. Exclusiveness and pride have no place in the centre aisle, because the centre of the

THE VALUE OF MAN.

kingdom is full of human feeling for human need. There is danger when we talk in a pleasant room full of well-clothed, well-fed, well-to-do people about love to man, that they will say, "Certainly we do love man. Do we not provide a church, a Sunday school, pleasant rooms for man? Do we not have ushers to show them seats and do we not have suppers and socials?" This is all easy, provided the man behaves himself and has ten cents or more. Take a real test. Here stands a man in ragged clothing. He has an unclean and disorderly appearance. You shrink. You dread contamination. You love clean and pure men. But stop! You are in the presence of a man. He is a son of God. Tread softly. Stand back in deference. What slumbering powers are in him? What may the interior of the man even now prove to be? What is his history? What is his ancestry? What are his surroundings? It is the narrow, selfish and ignorant man who scoffs at any man. Jesus Christ spoke in great severity to some men, but never spoke in scorn! The only thing

THE VALUE OF MAN.

he scorned was scorn itself, and those whom he chided most were chided for contempt of men. In the first chapter of the book of Revelation, the author, after calling Jesus Christ "the faithful witness," "the first begotten of the dead," "the prince of the kings of the earth," practically dedicates the work to "Him that loved us and washed us (the order is significant) from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen." Redemption thus completes creation. The testimony is uniform. The Bible begins, continues and ends with one consistent, sublime teaching on the value of the soul.

We may now consider several things which are involved in this view of man.

First, the saving forces of the world are moral forces. Without moral force man lapses to the range of the beast. The nations which lead civilization today, do so in exact ratio to their moral development. The nobility of man is seen where this nature has

THE VALUE OF MAN.

its freest and fullest opportunity. The nations which had least sympathy for the Greek as against the Turk, are those nations where the people have the least to say in affairs of the government, Russia, Germany and Austria. Those whose moral sympathies restrained them from violence against the Greeks, are the nations where the rights and duties of men have had most increasing respect, Great Britain, France and Italy. France found it hard to take the right side in our war with Spain, but Britain remained true and in a crisis there would have been others to stand for the right. This, with the added ideas that no nation is left without its democratic witness, and no emperor represents the best in his empire, will afford us hope for human weal in either the avoidance or issue of war. In every European crisis we have the sad spectacle of rulers opposing the desire and welfare of the people. Humanity is at a disadvantage, but it is not to forever remain in a condition hostile to its own interest. Surroundings favorable to selfishness and greed may have their own

THE VALUE OF MAN

way today, but not tomorrow. Character suffers and gains by surroundings, but is quite superior to them. The thrones of Europe shake more from fear of the people than from fear of disturbing the balance of power among rulers. The nations that have discovered man, hold the real ascendancy. The iron monsters that sail the deep must defend the weak against the strong. The history of civilization is the history of the conversion of power. Whenever power is being used to serve the interests of a few at the expense of many, the blood of Abel cries out for judgment, and God is not deaf. In every great struggle for human rights, nothing quite so clearly reveals the type of manhood as the side which one takes. If he sides with the strong against the weak he sides against God.

Second, let us never give a man up, however desperate his case. The estimate of man's dignity grows with his own growth. We can not remind ourselves too often of that large charity due souls under infinitely varied and trying conditions. It is the mis-

THE VALUE OF MAN.

fortune of many to have spent most of their life in contact with narrow, weak and mean types of men. The answer they give to the question, "What do you think of man?" is quite different from that of those who have all their days lived among large-hearted and generous spirits. It is not within the power of man, to entirely transcend his surroundings. He is the child of his age, his nation, his climate, his educational advantages. But within quite large limits, his freedom to choose and control is a guarded gift of God. Within these confines, "where there is a will there is a way." With such there are no evil stars. No defeat overtakes them but it is turned into victory. It is said that George Washington lost more battles than he won. His genius lay in organizing success out of defeat. When his foes thought that they were managing him, he was managing them. He was a fighter from his ancestors. The very stars in our flag are taken from the common origin of the rowel pointed spurs in a family coat-of-arms, but they shine with a worth that makes us proud of our country

THE VALUE OF MAN.

and our race. The trouble with the world is not that it fights, but that it fights on the wrong side, at the wrong time, for wrong ends and with the wrong spirit. The Lord declared that he came, not to send peace but a sword, and advised the disciples to carry a sword. "He that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one." "And they said Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough."

Lastly, the dignity of man is vindicated in the Son of Man. He revealed humanity at its best. As the best humanity he fulfilled the ethical conditions for a Divine self-revelation. The value of man cannot be absolutely appraised by the best man, unless that best man also has a unique and Divine quality which transcends humanity. God and man are kin, but we are brought to the realization of this fact by the supernatural element. This is not less true because we have a right to broaden our ideas of the supernatural to include the supersensuous. The fundamental dignity of man consists with the absence of any natural gulf between him and God.

THE VALUE OF MAN.

Jesus brings this fact into clearer social consciousness. Religion with him has a sanity of symmetry and an inspiration to live. He answers all the great questions of the human heart. Who is God? What is man? Why do we live? Whither go we? We are instructed by the record of his teachings, not in metaphysics, not with bewildering detail, but by the fundamentals needed for our development. These facts are not made so clear that they can not be doubted. Our character depends on the power to doubt, the danger of a fall, the unobtrusiveness of God's Providence, the unfettered will, the power to change our minds and train our affections.

God sends many prophets, though but one Eldest Brother. When the messages of all the prophets are united and made alive, they will still require, for the explanation of their unity and life, that unique life which anticipated the highest evolution of humanism. In the Son of Man we find the universal man, who is the pledge and potency by which each individual and each individual faculty

THE VALUE OF MAN.

reach a final goal in the fullness of Christian manhood and social transfiguration, the Utopia of the Kingdom of God.

Our estimate of a man depends on what we are willing to let our estimate cost us. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus set an infinite value upon each member of the human race, because his death was the expression of God's love for every man as a child of God. Others have this idea now, but it was original with Jesus as the one who reveals God, and therefore, the reality and not the mere possibility of our sonship and brotherhood is signified.

No doubt God is the only being capable of anticipating man's true nature. His rebukes are real, terrible because merciful. There are no threats. The greater the nature, the greater the shadows of its fall and peril. With such a constitution, with God clothing us, his children, with a majestic nature, holding before us all conceivable inducements to live worthily of our high calling, how is it possible for us to sell our birth-

THE VALUE OF MAN.

right for a song or count ourselves strangers to the valuation made by the cross of Christ.

As the soldiers contested for his robe, so the theologians have fought for the philosophy of the cross. The robe was without seam, but the theologies have been full of seams. The great idea of salvation is that Jesus Christ came to release men from slavery, to disengage Divine forces resident in the race, by which each person might rise to a full development. *The cross is the accident which reveals the essential.* The love of God met the free will of man in the time-server and did not prevent the consequences which would have occurred had the object of their hatred been any other man. But the willingness to suffer and to wait, till love is stronger than force, till all veils are rent and garments have no seams, till men shall strive with one another to provoke to good works, this is the nature of God. "Put ye in the Lord Jesus Christ," then you will have verified the Divine estimate of your own soul and by inference that of all men.

V.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

"We define criticism, therefore, as that mental process in modern Christianity whereby the historic character, the true nature, of divine revelation is appreciated and manifested. * * And to study the Bible critically is to assert its right to be understood, to be taken in its own sense."—*Henry S. Nash, The History of the Higher Criticism of the New Testament, pp. 14-15.*

"The Bible, then, is safe, both in the greater moral trial and in the slighter intellectual, because Christ is in it. Behind the New Testament is his Divine Person, and if, as I believe, the author of the Fourth Gospel is right, behind the Old Testament, back of the life of historic humanity, beyond the dim beginnings of our race upon this planet. Not upon literature, composed although it is of inimitable biography, wonderful history, unapproachable Psalm and prophecy, rests our belief; not in a record of a divine ministry, made up as it is of priceless evangelical narrative and glowing epistle, stands our faith, but upon the Spirit that produced these, upon the Person who did the works, who brought into existence the facts, and who revealed the eternal moral order of God of which the Testaments, Old and New, are but an incomplete version."—*Rev. George A. Gordon, D.D., The Christ of To-day, pp. 165-166.*

"Men are crying lo here! and lo there! We must find the source of authority in an inerrant Book, or in an enlightened reason or in an infallible Church, or perhaps all three; as if there could be three sources of one authority, or as if a channel could ever be rightly called a source. Let us not hesitate to pass through this confusion of tongues and of ideas, serene and untroubled, with the message of a more excellent way. Christ is the Light of all Scripture. Christ is the Master of holy reason. Christ is the sole Lord and life of the true Church."—*Henry Van Dyke, D.D., The Gospel For an Age of Doubt, pp. 198-199.*

V.

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" Acts VIII: 29-31.

THE Bible never had so much attention paid to it as it has to-day. There is no body of literature which deserves so much attention at the hands of a scientific and busy age like ours. This literature outlines a majestic movement more fascinating, to the student who loves his fellow men, than any other movement in the history of the globe.

From the beginning to the end of this collection of writings, called a book, but really sixty-six, there may be discovered one common thread in the warp, the thread of love. Sometimes it is God's love for man,

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

sometimes it is man's love for God and again man's love for man. Whatever the period, whatever the group of writings, this thread of gold is found from first to last. This is the strongest of the threads that bind the books together. If we should bind every book separately, as we sometimes do, no amount of separation could obliterate this central fact, which accounts for their long association under one cover. Whatever criticism of the Bible may do or may not do, it can only bring out into more striking relief this message of love. As regards the great duty of love, the wayfaring man, though a fool, can not err therein.

It is true that the intelligent reader of the Bible, who yet is no scholar, can obtain a great deal of information beside the emphasis of the universal law of love. There is certainly a constantly increasing tax laid upon men to understand the Bible, as other subjects occur in the literature that constitute the setting of that great principle which fulfills the law. It is this difficulty which accounts for the fact, that the Bible was so

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

long a closed book, even after the discovery of movable type. It is very largely a closed book now. This is further due to the fact that men have been so anxious to have a ready, external authority to settle all sorts of questions and controversies, that they have insisted that the Bible is inspired of God for that very object.

It is instructive first to recall the varieties of literary form which this library contains. There are poems and parables. There are several kinds of poetry, lyric, epic, dramatic. We have genealogy, annals and history. Laws appear both as principles and Hebrew statutes. Here is a body of practical political economy in the form of proverbs. There are love songs, the idyls which tell the old sweet story of the heart. Besides all this, theology, philosophy, correspondence, biography, fiction and prophecy help to make one grand chorus. The participants in this oratorio wear varied clothing soiled by their journey. Their ideas are contradictory. Sometimes they are right, sometimes wrong and ever fallible and partial, but their key-note and

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

symphony is love. It appears in the low and far away plaint of the minstrel, pleading his righteousness in the dark shadow of a fear that he has heard his God in the thunder, and ends in the hallelujahs of those standing uncrowned in white.

The fact now appears, that the Bible is not a message from God, like a letter from a father to his son at college. It is something better. Men have ever craved some easy going substitute for labor. In tropical climates, where men pick their living off the trees, the nations have remained in the infancy of civilization. When the time came for some higher development, God has provided for more stimulating surroundings which would tax their self-reliance. He led the Israelites into the wilderness of Sinai, the Pilgrims into the wilderness of Cape Cod. In the historical period of the Bible, and in the lessons found in the whole course of every national history, God follows one consistent rule, of throwing us as far as possible upon our own resources. The Bible is not a mint, where we gather the current coin of the

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

realm, to be had only for the asking. It is a mine in which we are to dig or beg. The ore is to be smelted. We are not to stultify ourselves by calling the crude ore, refined metal. In this, as in all other things we gain success by most diligent and life-long application. A man who starts out saying, The Bible is a good thing, I must be religious and read my Bible a little, opening at random, will make a failure. He is like a ten year old boy in London setting out at midnight to find the King. He is likely to strike the genealogical tables, or the visions of Daniel, or the Song of Solomon. He will often get harm as well as good, for he will shut up the book thinking he is pious because he has read the Bible. The Bible is like an encyclopedia, if not strictly one itself. One needs to know what he needs, to use it to best advantage. He needs to learn where that which his condition requires is to be found. He will then turn to it, with profit and pleasure. The fifteen pound, dust-covered family Bible, in the dark parlor, is not used because when people needed comfort, and

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

went to the book under a false theory and did not find at once what they needed, they ceased going.

They will not give up, so easily, when the truth comes to them that the book was written by forty or fifty different writers, who did their work independently, none of them dreaming that their writings would form a part of a collection of books, dealing with the social and religious development of man. They will face the new problem. The pains required will not discourage them.

“Yea ! if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” Instead of being stumbled by some hard and cruel utterance, which is arbitrary and relative, having explanation in the writer’s infirmity and limited point of view, they come back from their despair, to the study of the Scriptures, as those who have found great spoil.

It is often forgotten that inspiration is

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

compatible with fallibility. On the verbal theory of inspiration, one passage would require a very astute treatment by a commentator holding that theory, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." What had the apostle in mind in saying that the letter kills, that inspiration is compatible with fallibility? It is not understood that God's only conceivable method of revelation must keep pace with human limitations, use the weak symbols of human speech and employ prophets whose vision is largely limited by their own age. Each human writing, whatever its Divine content, must mark some stage of the process by which each person and nation is developed from within out. Since even the letter killeth when perfect, how Divine is the Providence which makes the letter imperfect, in order that we may be the less tempted to depend on the letter.

Every book has a face, character and life of its own. We meet one of them and acquaintance begins. We ask and get answers to such questions as the following: Who wrote you? When were you written?

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

Where? For whom? For what intent? What is local and what universal in your teaching? Thoroughly to understand the Bible, one needs to know nearly everything that is outside the Bible. To thoroughly understand what is outside of the Bible, one needs to know what is inside of it. Back of the *World's Bible*, is God's first volume of a revelation which includes the preparatory education of the race with God as instructor. We see more clearly and grasp with a more intelligent faith, the distinctive revelation made through any given form of this literature, when we approach it through a mastery of the earlier development. We see the debt of each writer to nature, to conscience, to old libraries, to the ages of struggle, which are represented in man's aspiration toward the ultimate satisfaction of his soul. In an age of doubt, and wide-spread secularity, it may seem like a profanation to say that the prophets were men of like sorrows and passions with us. The fresh interest which the Bible has, is coming to us from the discovery that God's inspiration adjusts itself to

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

human error and need by speaking through men who are themselves also "compassed with infirmity." In thus adapting Himself to fallible men, and deigning to employ human peculiarities, of thought, temperament and limitations, a method is used which is in complete keeping with the Gospel idea itself, love striving with the unthankful and those who are ignorant and out of the way. The Holy Spirit is found to be not an impersonal, mechanical force, carrying us to shrines, altars and books, but God in the soul, speaking through the partial materials of our limited experience.

The phrase, "Word of God," as found in the Bible, will have new meaning for us, when we find it in use before the Bible existed. The message of God is in the souls of men. Sometimes men reduce this message to writing, sometimes they do not. The best things were never written. These men of the Bible, separated at the extremes by fifteen hundred years, who sang, who acted, who spake, did all as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. If they wrote they had all the

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

preparation necessary. If infallibility had been necessary, that would have appeared.

The Divine inspiration is more rational than that of the sibyl. No peculiar mystery or spell, which is not the legitimate off-spring of truth, is claimed. Inspiration, on the contrary, is in perfect harmony with a literature which takes its rise and form under the common failings of human symbols and immaturity. How mechanical and wooden is that sort of inspiration which makes the Bible a monograph. A pretended revelation might be written by one man, and written with great care, so that all superficial points might betray no contradiction. A real revelation is imbedded deeply in the progress out of all that is conflicting and struggling and weighed down with error.

The glory of the Bible is, that it partly registers the progress of God's people as they advanced under His inspiration. Like the new invention, commonly known as the biograph, we have so many means of taking photographs, so many pictures of ancient Jewish life preserved, that we can make the

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

men of God to live again and walk in their habit, as they were. We see that they did as we are learning to do. They did not abandon their idea of inspiration, because they wished to incorporate into their literary work any existing records regarded by the writer as trustworthy. In his hymn of creation, the editor might use materials which other national records show to be a common stock of tradition.

Inspiration, man breathing in the breath of God, begins at the beginning of things. The Bible marks an epoch in the history of the globe. Fifteen hundred years of Bible-making seems a long time, relative to the unity of the literature, but it is no more to the history of the planet, than fifteen minutes to the life of an average man. At the beginning of Genesis we find one God asserted as behind and in all phenomena. The books of the Bible are snap shots taken at long intervals in the life of a single people. They have the truth of photographs. Situations are described. Neither favorable nor unfavorable criticism is advanced. If there is any-

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

where an endorsement of a course inconsistent with true righteousness, this is readily referable to the limitations of the age in which the writer lived. The pertinent query is, "Would you have done as well in his place?"

Truth does not spring full grown from the brain of God. It passes, through stages of partial disclosure, toward a perfect growth.

The Bible is not a purely human book, because it contains the accounts of men who speak messages for God which take color from passing through the faulty human medium. It is true that many a man has said to another, Thus saith the Lord, when the Lord did not say any such thing. A writer may write, Thus saith the Lord, without insincerity, when the Lord did not speak, even in his soul, as the writer thought. This but reveals the fact that God can use for one generation, a man who could not serve another generation. Erring as he is, he leads those who are about him to the dawn of a better day. It is nowadays, for example, getting to be very hard to use the Psalter, because the Psalms need so much sifting to

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

find sentiment suitable for Christian worship and feeling. Single passages of great inspiration, on account of their lofty plane, are mixed with long outgrown ranges of thought and life.

The Bible does not part with Divine inspiration, because it invites and ever challenges great freedom of interpretation. Your interpretation may be right or wrong, but the literature was never written with that modern exactness of verbal criticism which salutes a book to-day fresh from the press. Some things come out by accident rather than on purpose. Some things may never be understood, but the literature deals frankly, simply, largely, ingenuously with us.

By deciding, in advance, how good or great God is, and how he reveals and inspires, we limit the Holy Spirit in His effort to develop us by bringing together anew for every soul, those materials which are needed to reveal God to that soul. Such a man cannot be taught. The truth is just so long and just so broad. It is caught in the amber of the book. There is no room for sugges-

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

tion. He can not press on with courage for the future. Fear is his mood. The golden ages are for him the ages of the Canon.

There is also a use of the word plenary, in the matter of inspiration, which is employed to express dissent from strictly verbal inspiration, but which is not conceded to contain any considerable departure from the traditional use of the Scriptures. The Bible inspires, because it suggests, but does not describe the truths of the moral and spiritual sphere. It shows us the partial, not the plenary power. There is a great storehouse of fact and latent philosophy in this literature, but it never had in any of its parts a theological motive as the primary one. Even in the Gospel of John, the spiritual idea is far in advance of the theological. The books are all the more evidently Divine, because they do not pretend to contain all Divine truth. It was expedient that Christ should go away, in order that the Holy Spirit might not be localized and in order that worship might be no longer at either Gerizim or Jerusalem. The Spirit of the living God

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

moves in humanity revealing God, revealing man, revealing immortality. The Bible, Nature, Humanity, pour into the deep sea of Christian consciousness raising each generation nearer God.

The Bible has happily been so long in the world, and so won its way amongst men, that many are sensitive to any word that seems too tamely to describe its place and power. There is such a vast scale of progress between its earlier and later compositions, that words used to describe the former fail to do fairly by the latter. The early writers deal with beginnings, and are themselves beginners. The later writers are penetrated with the lofty Spirit of Christ, and rise with Him into a lofty enthusiasm for humanity. The Bible is a vital, not an ecclesiastical collection. The books are spiritual photographs of the process of revelation. These pictures were taken at different times and from different points of view, with varying light and shade. They are all the more valuable because the ages were unconscious of being in any camera. The records are artless and accurate

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

reproductions of the times, the state of literature and the condition of the people. From them can be traced the steps of the unfolding revelation. The words used for the name of God are radiant with evidence of this development. The Bible, in its human coloring, like the Lord, is not less Divine because so human and real. Its visions are sudden, but not without long periods of preparation. The Bible is more complete and deserves more honor because of the imperfections made necessary to Divine adaptation. By imperfections is not meant the errors of copyists, but those involved in the whole process of human and Scripture development. A period of conduct precedes a period of high motive. Principles are slow to fulfill rules. The least in the kingdom is greater in opportunity than the greatest prophet of the old order. Revelation is of, rather than from God. It is in, rather than to man. It is recorded and unrecorded, but never lost. It is not at any one point, the last word on the everlasting theme. As concerns source and direction, the current of the Old Testament is the current of the

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

New. However, the river of Life deepens and hastens and widens as it flows. The writers are inspired. They inbreathe God. They have sufficient preparation for their work. They have all the preparation they can appropriate. Some have great gift but less spirituality. Others great spirituality but less gift. The literature fascinates and stimulates. It never represses thought. It gives a starting capital to the wayfaring man, but refuses to hold him up with authority or crutch by a plain meaning for every Scripture. He must dig or beg. The Bible does not pauperize a man either mentally or spiritually. It is a standard, not the only infallible rule. It is a Divine auxiliary to revelation, not the revelation itself. That distinction belongs to Jesus Christ. He is the head of the corner, the keystone of History. The Bible is a telescope *through* which we look to find God.

Our theory of inspiration need not suffer because the writers incorporated existing records. Errors of immaturity serve as eddies in the stream, and show by contrast

WHAT IS THE BIBLE.

the strength of the main current. We are not to defend a course contradicting the Spirit of Christ, when the Bible records a wrong, with or without favorable characterization. Inspiration may concern any partial statement which it would require knowledge of contemporary conditions to fully explain. Inspiration leaves room for interpretation. How can we know any subject or object without the double right of bringing it to the reason and the reason to it.

The parts of the Bible which help us, the diligent learn to find and love. We magnify the final discrimination of the apostle.

"Every Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

VI.

THE GOSPEL POWER.

"And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the mystery (or testimony) of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified." (Not the crucifixion of Christ, but the character of God represented in his disposition to suffer and die for his children.) —St. Paul.

"I plead for the love of God, which resists sin and triumphs over it, not for a mercy which relaxes the penalties of it. With continual effort, only by the help of that revelation of God which is made in the Gospel of Christ I am able to believe that there is a might of good which has overcome evil. * * To maintain this conviction, to believe in the love of God, in spite of the appearances which the world presents and the reluctance of my own nature, I find to be the great fight of life. * * I admire unspeakably those who can believe in the love of God and can love their brethren in spite of the opinion which they seem to cherish, that he has doomed them to destruction. I am sure that their faith is as much purer and stronger than mine, as it is than their own system. I do not call them to deny anything they have been wont to hold; but I call upon them to join us in acknowledging God's love and his redemption first of all, and then to consider earnestly what is or is not compatible with that acknowledgment."—*F. D. Maurice.*

"This revelation which is made in the person of Christ brings God very near to us. We see this son of God entering into all our human experiences, toiling, hungering, thirsting, rejoicing, weeping; we hear him calling himself the Son of Man, and it is borne into our minds that the chasm which our thought had made between divinity and humanity does not exist; that we are, indeed, what Jesus always calls us, the children of our Father in heaven. * * But the sufferings of Christ reveal something more than the love of God for men, they reveal his hatred of sin. For in order that men may be saved, it is needful not only that they be enabled to understand God's love for them, but also that they be taught to share his wrath against the sin which is destroying them. To human beings in their present environment, these two experiences are necessary to salvation,—love of the good and hatred of the evil."—*Washington Gladden.*

VI.

THE GOSPEL POWER.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Rom. 1:16.

THIS is the greatest theme possible to letters or speech. It underlies everything. It concerns the most important affairs of our nature and future. The apostle Paul realized that it was necessary to solve the problem of being, to learn the secret of a happy life, to in some way gain the end, the goal of existence. He therefore sought what he called righteousness. Righteousness was the end as regards virtue; joy was the end as regards welfare. The two were necessarily united. The apostle stood at a period in history when he sought to tell his countrymen, that the time had come to seek righteousness by a higher process and by a more effectual method than had ever been used. The Jews were very much afraid that the apostles were

THE GOSPEL POWER.

going to abandon Moses, throw away the orthodoxy of the past, rid the world of the wisdom of the ages. They therefore adhered to what they called the law, or righteousness as administered by Moses and the prophets. But Paul said, That which you have only been trying to do by law is accomplished in a person, is realized by a new method, the Gospel, the glad tidings of Jesus Christ. He knew that he would everywhere meet with opposition. He did. The Greek opposed him with what Paul called "wisdom," that is philosophy. The Roman opposed him with organization and force. The Jew opposed him with those methods of righteousness with which Paul himself, had become familiar as a scholar under Gamaliel.

The apostle did not throw away the past. He honored the moral constitution of the race. He declares that those, whose moral natures have not had the Jewish training, can "do by nature the things contained in the law." The men, like Socrates, who rose above their fellows, received full credit for their attainments as well as for their common

THE GOSPEL POWER.

humanity. There is no sneer at ethics as such. Rather there is no higher moral standard than that which he proclaims. It is not his first care however to set forth the superiority of his *model*. This is assumed. Paul puts himself on common ground with those devout souls who have not accepted the Christ. He assumes that they with him seek to attain an ideal, and seek it by the best means. Finally he says, I have discovered the way to do it. The power which can carry this work on, from the point where all else fails, is found in the Messiah. All that men tried to do with simple light of uninstructed conscience, all that the Jew sought by ritual and priesthood, is made complete in the personal power of God revealed through Jesus Christ. Paul had stumbled around too long, as great intellects have often done, to exhort his readers to do good and be good, without giving them some proportionate incentive. Christianity was not, first of all, righteousness to Paul, but a power to secure righteousness in the soul and society.

The primitive religions had failed. The

THE GOSPEL POWER.

empires with which they were connected were falling into decay. Conduct was their criterion and not a very high standard either. They dealt with the idea of obedience. This was their refrain, "obey, obey"; not so much an inner principle as an outward law, but whether they were trying to obey the inner or the outer, nevertheless that word was about as far as the human race had come. "Obey" is a most important idea, but it is weak relative to the whole problem of inspiration and salvation, because it commonly leaves out that degree of obedience which has given us the Gospel. The individual existed for the state in old Sparta, not the state for him. When the true place of man was discovered old traditions fell back. Once the ideas to conjure with were Roman citizenship, or being a son of Abraham. Their service to the world was to fade before the new idea of human brotherhood.

The Jewish system above all the other systems emphasized righteousness, and cultivated moral earnestness. A deep sense of unrest was found in the great natures, and

THE GOSPEL POWER.

we find them tossed with the feeling of the contrast between the ideal and the real. They knew not where to turn because of the vastness of the problem of life. Now we are in the same old struggle. It is a study of the human mind. It is not theology. It is not philosophy, but simply fact. All have this great gap between what they are and what they would be, what they see and what they want. This ideal chafes against the real till it passes into worry and fret. It is also the Divine Providence that the world is to be lifted up by compelling us to strive. We have before us the ideal man Jesus. We have in him what we nowadays call manhood instead of righteousness because manhood is a word that is more natural and more comprehensive. If Jesus Christ is a model of manhood, then in order to be a progressive man, one must be Christian, because the future of the race and the definition of the nature of any individual in it, is realized in Jesus Christ, who stands as the actual comprehension of the ideal and the real. This however is not the Gospel. If it proved im-

THE GOSPEL POWER.

possible for the ancient world to build men and nations on conscience and intellect struggling with law, then the problem is rendered impossible of solution, since we are given only a harder task. The gulf widens between us and the tantalizing vision of perfection which enchants as it recedes. Every proclamation of the beatitudes may make us despise the righteousness of the scribe, but we are lost to all peace and progress if we attempt the repentance of Jesus with the baptism of John.

The power of Jesus was unique. Many have tried to account for Jesus by inadequate methods. He was not an orator as Cicero. He taught the people by the roadside and the well. He calmly sat and conversed with them. He simply reasoned the simplicities of the truth as it is. Men saw and loved him. He was born under a cloud. He had no schooling, as schooling went in the theological seminaries of that day. He had no ordination from the temple authorities, and yet he was a religious teacher. He did not affect any of the fine arts in his work. He

THE GOSPEL POWER.

did not use philosophy. He did not organize to any considerable extent. His organization was of such simple character that it is almost impossible to find it. He never wrote a line of parchment, leaving the field of literature entirely out of view. He did nothing in the way of diplomacy. He made no appeal to the sword. He had no wealth. He did not know in the morning where he was to lay his head at night. He did not know from whence was to come his next meal. He was dependent upon the generosity of a few friends. Their gifts were devoid of special money value. He stood for one idea, that idea as large as the universe, the idea of love, friendship, brotherhood. And he raised that so high or rather brought it so low that the centuries have said that the best is in him and that if we reach the best in us, we must discover an inspiration, a sufficient motor to move the soul and solve the problem of reaching the complete human stature. Christ's example alone is the absolute annihilation of hope, but Paul proved that there was no hope

THE GOSPEL POWER.

even before the consideration of this example, of gaining the ideal.

Nor is this all which impels us to look further than love considered as duty, to find hope for the individual and society. Many things have followed the advance of Christianity. Science, commerce and art have poured their treasures upon the nations where Christ is held in honor. Honesty, virtue, truth, righteousness, make rich. All the promises of the Old Testament about abundant vineyards are being fulfilled in every righteous people. These things added to us, as those who put first the Kingdom of God, bring great problems, especially where it is proposed to cut down the tree and keep the fruit. The generations have passed through a great evolution. What is that resident force which helps individual men to toil without weariness, to master the flesh, to grow without the withering sense of failure.

We may not part from our ideals, we do not readily do so in matters not religious. The house we live in was once nothing but a hole in the ground and then came the idea of

THE GOSPEL POWER.

four posts with some kind of thatch and finally another room where we put a part of our things instead of having them all in one room, and then three rooms, and by and by came architecture and all the comforts of life as regards the home. Everything we take up has this wonderful evolution in it. We work it out in everything except religion, and then we say, Well, I don't know. I think I am good enough now, I don't need any more religion. Here we have the old story of conceit, and nothing can be done about it. Nothing ever grew in that soil. You can improve the soil in a man of weak mental faculties, but there seems to be nothing to do for the man or the mood of self-sufficiency. One may say, If there is anything better than I have, I want it. The other says, There is nothing better than I already have.

There is however the man who confesses his shortcomings, and still shirks. He urges inability as excuse for a lack of aspiration. The ideal is degraded by others who want credit for being conscientious and yet desire to escape from the labor which duty involves.

THE GOSPEL POWER.

They accuse the leaders of being dreamy, impracticable. They do not as of yore, kill the prophet, but they freeze him. To escape the annoyance of hearing what they do not propose to apply, they may rid themselves of the pain of straight preaching, by staying at home and cutting the nerve, leaving the hand dead and powerless to lift their fellow-men. Or on the other hand, they may attend church and insulate themselves by the attempt to feed their religious natures on the falsely mystical, not on music, but on music divorced from truth and life. Paul was not that kind of stuff. He faced his ideal. He concealed nothing. He ran from nothing. He stood before the truth, heard it through and then declared what, in various measure, is the universal experience of those who try to find peace by working on lines of law.

"Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

In the forced march of virtue, he was chained by the wrist to a dead comrade, whose body he was compelled to carry while trying to maintain his place in the

THE GOSPEL POWER.

ranks. The power of deliverance which he sought and found, he now proclaims to the world. His message came with a moral grasp felt by a mind of the first order, and a heart large enough for Jew and Greek.

The secret of our success in this life, as God counts success, the secret of it in the individual and in our prosperity as a nation, our social regeneration and development in sweeter manners and purer laws, the sole secret is the Gospel. That is the remedy. That is what this country needs, life from God, more life from a God who is in sympathy with humanity, who identifies himself with men, who gives himself in Jesus Christ as a hostage, so that he goes up or down with us. A great wrath and pity are self-reconciling in an infinite love bent upon and realizing the cure and salvation of men. We are identified with him and he with us in this fact of power to build manhood. Thus, while we hold our ideals, and do not try to put them down, nor ignore them, nor stay away from places where they are contemplated and studied, but make a business

THE GOSPEL POWER.

of guarding the slightest flame of the spiritual nature, we do so by a new method. We substitute a personal for a legal process, we find that our relation to Jesus is one of friendship, and therefore identification of interests. He bestows power upon us as a gift. This gift does not imply a dole or charity, but friendship. God is our friend and he brings power. He throws his force into the scale where are balanced evil and good, and evil kicks the beam. He asks us not to keep the iron hot by striking it, but to heat the iron and when it is hot, to strike it. We are to be saved, not by what we already are, not by the virtues he has helped us in other ways to attain, even if one should surpass the apostle St. John, but by himself, by his eternal nature revealed in Jesus Christ. Why does God help you and me? Why does he take an interest in humanity? Because he loves to do so. Why did you help that man yesterday? You love to do those things. The philosophy of it is that you have a habit of helpfulness, the outgrowth of action and life choice. God loves the sinner, and the

THE GOSPEL POWER.

gospel for every age and country is, that when we have power of any kind, be it wealth or learning or skill, that superiority brings with it responsibility, and we merge ourselves in our brethren and we love to do it. We live in it and grow by it. God's method is, to be sure, ethical, but ethics that depend upon the absolute God. If we are trying to be right, if we are in a current of desire, hope and attempt, God says, Those imperfections in my child do not count. I do not hold those against him. I am trying to take him where he is and get him up out of his imperfections. I am trying to bring him into a personal relationship that will make life a large, free, rich thing to him, so that the Christian life will be a privilege and the service of God a delight. That is the way God talks to us. The morality we have is good as far as it goes. God desires that we should all have more. This is not only desirable but necessary, because not to grow is to die. Higher character is absolutely indispensable. God is not jealous of you because you are able to add some qualities that do

THE GOSPEL POWER.

not at once seem to be very directly related to prayer and the church, but remember that this morality is but the root of a tree yet to grow, of fruit yet to be harvested. Spirituality and morality then center in this development of salvability. Is there anything that we ought to be more thankful for than the fact that we can grow? We are here to grow in charity for one another, in generosity and magnanimity and kindness and love for all mankind. This is the first great lesson of life.

A rich man is not to be despised because he is rich. Who does not want riches? A poor man is not to be despised because he is poor and wears poor clothing. He cannot change his clothing as often as other men. He is no more vulgar, if he be vulgar, than the vulgar rich man who knows how to earn his money and does not know how to spend it, while the poor man thinks he knows how to spend it and may not know how to earn it. We are not to be communists and hold all in common, but what we need to do is to put together our common interests in the com-

THE GOSPEL POWER.

mon brotherhood of charity, to realize that when we have worked our full time in the mill, we have not discharged our full obligation to our employer, since he is also our brother; and when the employer has paid the wage agreed upon he has not, in so doing, discharged his full responsibility because he too, is dealing with a brother. We are to see Jesus Christ in the face of every man, not by virtue of the character which is now his, but by virtue of that *salvability*, the process of righteousness which the friendship principle works out. That is the Gospel. That is all of it. Brethren, we are called to the liberty of the sons of God.

Salvation is thus a very clear process in which reason, conscience, ideals, motives and friendship mingle. Salvation means that God loves man and man, despite his wanderings, loves God. The love in God is the ground of our hope and accomplishment. The love in us is the *salvability* which gives salvation, or the love of God, its leverage and opportunity. We would not be *salvable*, by any fictitious, imputed righteousness. Now

THE GOSPEL POWER.

if there be any old commentary or sermon about the house that preacheth another gospel you may not need to keep it under lock and key, because the sheep know the voice of the shepherd, and it probably has few if any readers. This sort of literature is already on sale in job lots with many other books for a few cents, or found in broken sets on the top shelves of second hand book stalls. Such works have but a fleeting interest for the man who has formed the habit of revering a book as a book, just as people are willing to believe a statement they see printed, when if the same statement were made by word of mouth, they might give it no attention whatever.

The apostle was not a theologian engaged seventeen hundred years in advance of the Westminster Confession, to support that false system. He was a brother Jew writing to his countrymen in the Jewish quarter at Rome, and incidentally to the Gentile element, that there was a new motor discovery for right living and that it would work for all mankind. The epistle to the Romans is no

THE GOSPEL POWER.

longer the hard book to understand which the teachers made it. A child can understand it now, if I am right in the following free paraphrase in words of one syllable: Paul, who was a great and good man, who had love for all men and his Lord, said that men who sought to do right and to be right at heart by work at the church and such like things were in the same wrong way he was when a young man. He did not blame them, but said, while you should not work less, do not get the cart in front of the horse. Do work in the free air of love. Work by love not by mere love of work. Peace will dwell in your mind as you learn to lose self in the work of love. You seek to do good not to get peace, and peace seeks you. So you see peace is the child of love and faith, not of work for the sake of work. Where love is, sin is not, for love casts out sin.

The law of ritual is fulfilled in the law of love. The law of ethics is completed in the law of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is holy, because perfectly ethical and friendly. The law of lofty ideal becomes the law of

THE GOSPEL POWER.

happy obedience. Peace in the soul enables us to walk with God through the imperfect and failing scenes of a life growing in strength and freedom. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to both salvability and grace, to salvation by truth, by the living truth of a perfect friendship.

VII.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

"There is a drawback to the value of all statements of the doctrine; and I think that one abstains from writing or printing on immortality of the soul, because, when he comes to the end of his statement, the hungry eyes that run through it will close disappointed; the listeners say, that is not here which we desire,—and I shall be as much wronged by their hasty conclusion, as they feel themselves wronged by my omissions. I mean that I am a better believer, and all serious souls are better believers in the immortality than we can give grounds for. The real evidence is too subtle, or is higher than we can write down in propositions, and therefore Wordsworth's "Ode" is the best modern essay on the subject. We can not prove our faith by syllogisms. The argument refuses to form in the mind. * * Speak of the mount in the mount. Not by literature or theology, but only by rare integrity, by a man permeated and perfumed with airs of heaven,—with manliest or womanliest enduring love,—can the vision be clear to a use the most sublime. And hence the fact that in the minds of men the testimony of a few inspired souls has had such weight and penetration. You shall not say "O my bishop. O my pastor, is there any resurrection? What do you think? Did Dr. Channing believe that we should know each other? did Wesley? did Butler? did Fenelon?" What questions are these? Go read Milton, Shakespeare or any truly ideal poet. Read Plato, or any seer of the interior realities. Read St. Augustine, Swedenborg, Immanuel Kant. Let any master simply recite to you the substantial laws of the intellect and in the presence of these laws themselves you will never ask such primary school questions."—*Ralph Waldo Emerson. Letters and Social Aims. Essay on Immortality, pp. 280-281.*

"It is not by any speculative ideas of philosophy, but by the vision of Jesus' life and death, and by the feeling of his imperishable union with God that mankind, so far as it believes in these things, has attained to that certainty of eternal life for which it was meant, and which it dimly discerns— eternal life in time and beyond time. This feeling first established faith in the value of personal life. But of every attempt to demonstrate the certainty of immortality by a logical process, we may say in the words of the poet:

Believe and venture; as for pledges,
The Gods give none.

Belief in the living Lord, in a life eternal, is the act of the freedom which is born of God."—*Harnack. What is Christianity? p. 176.*

VII.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Jno. 10: 10.

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also." Jno. 14: 2, 3.

MEN cling to life. Outside of the range of Christian influence, men not only fear death, but even regard it with terror. Christianity has largely removed the fear of death, while at the same time doubling her own task, by increasing the desirability of life. There is rarely much pain at death. What men dread is annihilation. Some say that death ends all. Others deny that death is the end. The result is a painful questioning. It is no uncommon thing to hear a man say, "I would give anything to know whether immortality is a fact." A large class comes into contact

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

with religion just enough to keep agitated, and not enough to make its great truths the basis of conduct or the inspiration of life. They deprive themselves of the greatest proof of immortality. There is a proof of immortality in the probable argument from reason working in the fields of philosophy and natural science. There is however a higher and more convincing proof in the demand the soul makes when that same reason is clarified, not by an emotion, but by that more complete obedience to law which can make the mortal heavenly.

We are not to refuse audience to the views of philosophy, because our own faith in every future event rests on probability. Let us rather call up, as our first witness, Father Time himself, with his scythe, hour glass, hoary locks, and high forehead. He is to testify of time not eternity. Tell us Father, what you know about immortality from your observation of men. His answer is, that men, as a rule, have ever clung to a belief in their immortality. Here and there individuals have doubted and attacked the doctrine.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

These cases are exceptional. They have rather served to demonstrate the vitality of the teaching, which has gained headway in spite of attack and strengthened its hold on the soil, as the winds of wintry doubt have wrestled with its branches. It is easy to undervalue this witness. No one can afford to ignore the drift of the centuries. It may pay to ignore the testimony of one man, or ten men, but the agreement of a race, and an agreement made emphatic in the ratio of growth in civilization, is quite another matter. "Men may," it is objected, "believe what is after all not true." Yes, one man, ten men, even a generation; but when you consider the masses of men, it takes less credulity to say that the fact of immortality corresponds to the belief, than to say that it is untrue. This idea gathers force when we remember that we do not have to quote merely the heroes of the visible church, but that Cicero, Plato, Plutarch, Montesquieu, Franklin, Robert Burns, Emerson, and a host beside, held to belief in immortality.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

These facts remove the question above the level of scorn.

- No man ought to want to die as the beast dies. If he takes such a creed, let him hold it reluctantly, not by choice. There is nothing very pleasant about it. Let him prove to us that death ends all. We are all alive here today. We shall all be alive tomorrow, unless something occurs before that time to kill us. The only thing we know, that can be conceived to kill us, that is, to completely end both soul and body, is called death. So far as anyone can see to the contrary, death only disorders the material organism. It redistributes the type in nature's font. It cannot distribute the ideas and spirit which the type has expressed. I exist. It is an assumption wholly without foundation, that death touches the soul. No one should say, I die with the body, when even Mr. Ingersoll can assert, "Hope may hear the flutter of a wing, and faith may see a star."

Science has taught us to expect surprises. Immortality is no greater surprise than the

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

origin of species. The origin of species is no greater surprise than the development of animal from vegetable life. This in turn is not so great a leap as the one from inorganic to organic nature. These facts remove all presumption against a future environment for the soul which shall correspond to its nature and the law of its growth. If science has established anything in regard to the method of the Divine creation, it is, that harmony exists between the various parts of nature. A fin on a fish means water. A wing on a bird means air. A cushion on the end of a camel's leg means hot sand. The wild geese going south means winter. Mortise and tenon do not so closely fit as one part of God's creation fits another. The design is not less because of the manner in which it is displayed. The harmony transcends appearance, and reveals as kindred, varying forms of life. The Christian is the type of the future. The Earth, though a vestibule of immortality, is becoming like the porch of the Hebrew temple, beautiful. Nature furnishes the raw material. The

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

harmonies are hidden. The order is, search, discovery, use. The stages of ascent are barbarism, civilization, christianization, immortality. We do not have to wait for the full development to enjoy a goodly measure of its benefits. We are under happy laws, not caprice. God could be neither wise nor good to give the young wild goose the instinct by which it safely goes from Manitoba to the sunny south and then bestow on man the much stronger instinct for a summer land of immortality only to fool him with annihilation. We not only believe in and desire a future life, we demand it. Animals do not demand it. The law of harmony is not violated in their case. Unlike men they have a bounded horizon. They secure a speedy development and serve their purpose of utility. Man, on the other hand, develops slowly and at the best only gets a start in this life. When he shakes off the flesh, he is just prepared to live. The greatest men are in haste to call themselves infants. They admit that they have but touched the hem of the garment of knowledge and character.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

They have only taken a few steps. Earth is the alphabet, Heaven the literature of humanity. Our lives are full of plans. Some succeed. Some fail. "Hearts are broken, heads are turned by castles in the air." It was not wrong to construct some of them. "Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" applies to much of this life. It is quite another thing to say that disappointment is the main fact, when all the facts are understood. Men cannot be fooled all the time. They will not be content with the food that satisfies a brute. Aspiration is not forever married to doom. What God has not joined together He will most certainly keep asunder.

Things happen every day which make us desire distributive justice. We say that man will have to give an account. There will have to be a reckoning. A righteous apprehension of a future judgment rises in us. It looks beyond this life. The Creator could put in us an apprehension of a future judgment to act solely as a restraint in this world. He would be guilty of making us believe a

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

lie in order to govern us. The government of human affairs is clumsy. Men who are smart go free. The dull criminal is caught. Those who are comparatively innocent suffer degrading punishment. God's justice works itself out on a long and correct scale. Our God surely believes in government by the people, instead of interfering Himself or helping kings and vice-gerents to do so in His name. But should he hold court at the town hall tomorrow, in place of our regular judge, we should be interested to see who would be called into court. It requires a future life to make the last first and the first last, to right wrongs, to proclaim things secret, to vindicate honor. Merciful and righteous discriminations will obtain dominion. Immortality is necessary. There is a Heaven, There is a Hell. Neither is physical. Both begin in this life. The former never ends. The latter does not end in this life. Here is a good man impressed with hope. There is a man depressed with fear. His sins are real, great and unforsaken. The feelings are not accidental. They follow law. We

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

are looking at a portrait of humanity. These facts have little meaning unless there is a future life.

Note also the abounding hardship of the world. Terrible diseases are to be fought. Poverty is to be struggled against by millions. Storms, fires, floods, earthquakes, massacres, temptations, evils legion, mountain high, attend the infant steps of man. "The whole creation groans." Mr. Ingersoll was right. Said he, "If I were to make the world I would make health catching." He is right, if this world be all. The sacrifice would not pay. The burden would be too great. The pain is not gauged to the need of one short life soon to end forever. Force yet rules the larger portion of the world. The vast militarism of the European powers, is a confession of this fact, whether it is regarded as a necessary defense or the spirit of aggression. The doctrine of one world at a time is false, if by it one means to ignore the worth and dignity which the truth of immortality bestows. Mental, moral and spiritual manhood are trained in the school of difficulty. Too

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

noble qualities are being developed to make health catching. The cost is too great for the return on the investment. We demand an immortality wherein pain and every sort of expense shall prove themselves justifiable. No one objects to a God who is a consuming fire if His fire has a purifying purpose and result.

Again the belief is not only associated with the highest type of character found in the world, but men and women declare that without the fact of immortality they would not have that character. It would seem to be impossible to escape the conclusion that belief in immortality is essential to the growth of the best manhood. The lives not only of Paul and Luther, but our February saints, Lincoln, Mary Lyon and George Washington received motive and power from an immortal perspective. If it be declared that they only imagined the dome over their heads to be lighted by beams from an eternal world, then we are asked to believe that a delusion can produce good character and that a falsehood is more wholesome than the truth.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

Each year many loyal citizens step aside from their usual duties to give special honor to Abraham Lincoln. Many a pulpit rings with patriotic pride for the martyr president. Of him John Lothrop Motley, the historian, has said, "He went through life bearing the load of a people's sorrow with a smiling face. As long as he lived he was the guiding star of a whole brave nation, and when he died the little children cried in the streets." Is this such a man as our pantheistic friends sacrifice to the mass of society, while leaving no more room for his own personality after death, than the smoke of a locomotive has, as it disappears in the frosty air? Our home and friendship ties bind us more closely together as years pass. The young couple have a more demonstrative love than the old. The old couple have a deeper love than the young. Time enriches life. It removes some things and brings in others. The vitality and power of the affections are intense, unconquerable and always growing. Little ones come and go. Often the only consolation that makes life endurable is belief in immortality. Life

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

would be a tantalizing thing, not worth living, a lie, without a future life.

Thus far we have been answering the question put in the book of Job, "If a man die shall he live again?" We may open the New Testament and find that Jesus Christ assumed immortality, while he brought life. If He had not been going to prepare heavenly mansions for them, He would have told them so. Such things were matters of course. The prime condition of the occupation of the mansions, was keeping His commandments, character. He therefore spent all his time in telling them by example and precept, how to live. Having the revelation, the personal Gospel of the risen Lord, we have complete peace. The Gospel is not a guess. It is revelation. It is not limited. It is universal. It is not relative. It is absolute. It is not a future matter to wait for, but a present lever to pry up life. It is itself life. It is for Earth as well as Heaven. It is eternal, a gift rather than a promise, a possession rather than a hope. "He that believeth on me *hath* eternal life," not *will* have it. Who

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

believes that He who spoke these words was annihilated at the change we call death? Love declares its own eternity. There are transient elements in the Earth, but genuine virtue is not one of them. Some say that "a man without virtue may exist hereafter, but that a man with virtue ought to live forever." He will. Eternal life and eternal virtue are synonymous terms. It is not enough to exist. We must live. Existence without life may be worse than death. Life without existence is an absurdity. Doubt and sin are not necessarily related. It is nevertheless true, that more men would have the conviction of immortality, were it not for the blur which sin makes. Eternal life should appeal to man not as a reward but as an intrinsic good. It develops the whole man. It builds him on a larger scale than he would otherwise be constructed. Immortality gives scope, outlook and satisfying range to the mind. It gives tonic. It makes tolerant. It justifies sacrifice. It can afford to be serene in the storms of life. It is full, free, growing, abundant life. Some one asks

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

whether I am willing to "call it salvation." No! It is more. It includes salvation. It is sufficient in itself. It can if necessary be happy in Hell.

Looking at humanity exactly as it is, we often fail to discover very much dignity. We might easily spare the citizens of China, India, Africa, Turkey and many other countries. Sink these countries in the sea and it would be hard to show that the world had lost one idea or a single invention. Take an illustration nearer home. Take the first man you meet. He has this, that or the other good quality. The rest is accounted for by the fact that he is assuming, or is good looking, or that he has a good address, or has had forty thousand dollars left him by a rich annt. He is an overestimated soul. He is an immortal far from home. Can we help matters? We can first of all throw the man on the true and eternal perspective. Wait. He is now in the seed form. I grant you more, that the man is mean, that he is a liar. You will have to regard him as a very sick patient. Project this ignorant, sinful man

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

against the background of a hopeful eternity and you will be able to work when you would otherwise despair. There is a victory for the race through him who "tasted death for every man." Each man has an infinite value and unlimited possibility of growth.

Heaven is pictured for us in the Scriptures. We receive it as pictorial. From the example of the Scriptures we, as individuals, accept the same structural principle of picturing our Heaven. The pigments of our painting are taken from our daily life. Deeds and spirit mingle to make a beauty which we can not analyze. The best artist is the one whose work is the most truthful. He has the ascending habit of imagination. His moral genius works upward instead of downward. He parts with a dear friend and Heaven is joined to earth by one more golden cable. The older he gets the more populous the other world becomes. The disposition of us in families here, the gradual, certain calling of us all one by one, deepens our conviction of immortality.

We dare not trust mere existence. If we

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

hope to meet and associate forever with those who have gone before us, we must live on their plane. Existence in an animal can be conceived to consist with annihilation. The question has been raised whether we are naturally immortal or whether we win our way to immortality in life inspired and imparted by Jesus Christ. While one may not subtract at all from the importance of the arrival at Heaven by the vital ethical process of "truthing it in love," as Paul would say, we must believe that immortality is knit into our soul tissues. It is easier for one to believe that man is so made in the image of God, that it is all but impossible to get that image out, than it is to think that there is so little of His image in a man, that masses will have to meet annihilation because they do not rise into the life of the Christ in this life or the life beyond. It was for this reason that Jesus rejected the temptation to emphasize material prosperity or to win results with the crowds by sensations of magic, or lord it over them by power.

Whether your view of the facts leads you

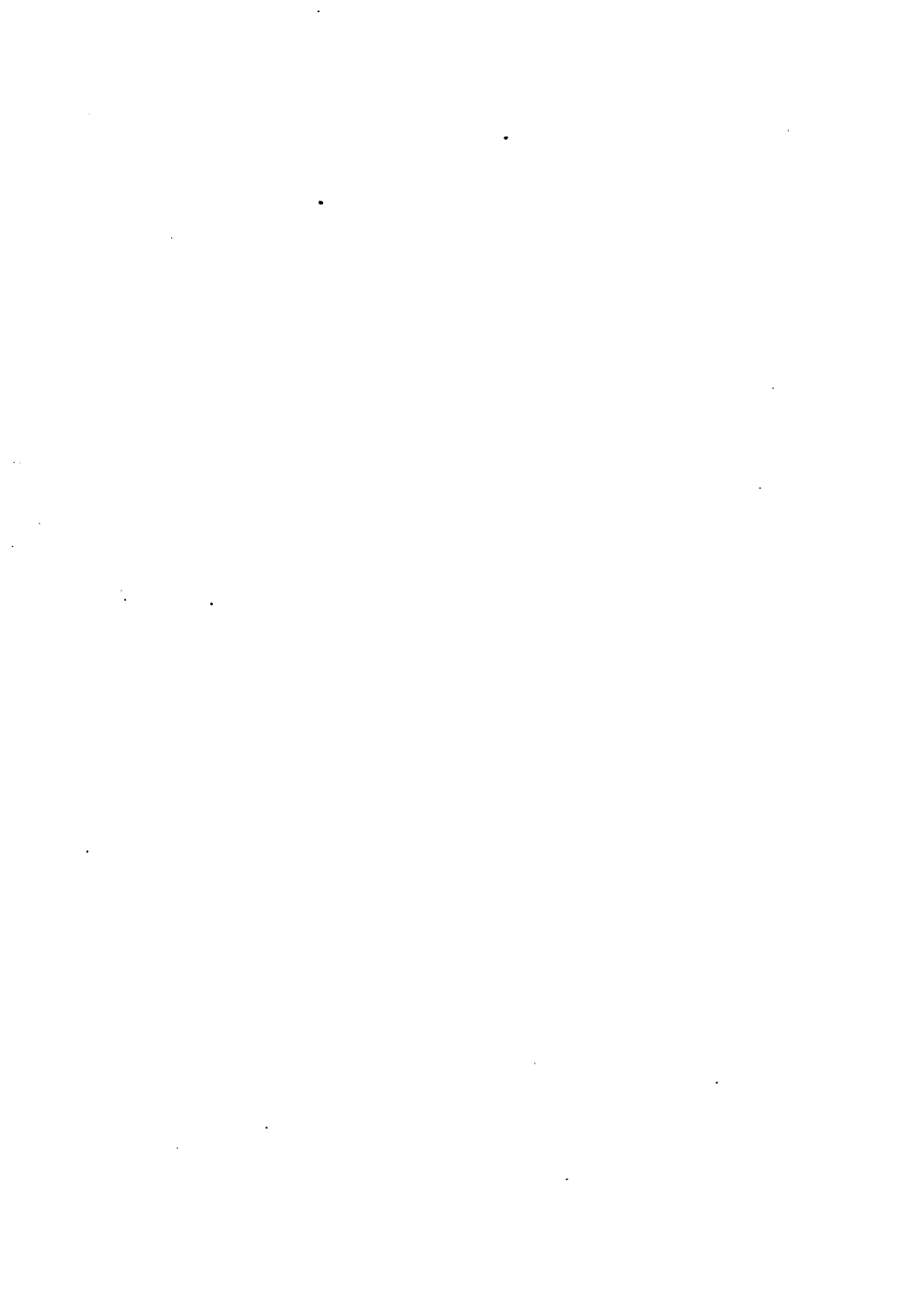
LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

to hope or to fear, this great fact remains, God is love demanding life and life is love demanding, not a fair chance merely, not a probation even, but all that an almighty, all-loving father can devise in not only beginning, but completing the creation and education of his own child. It is our highest privilege to find refuge in God's eternal goodness. The incarnation and the events which it includes, were not after-thoughts of God to relieve a desperate and unexpected situation. It was God speaking to his child, as soon as the child could hear. It was God appearing to his child, as soon as the child could see. The practical question is a present world issue.

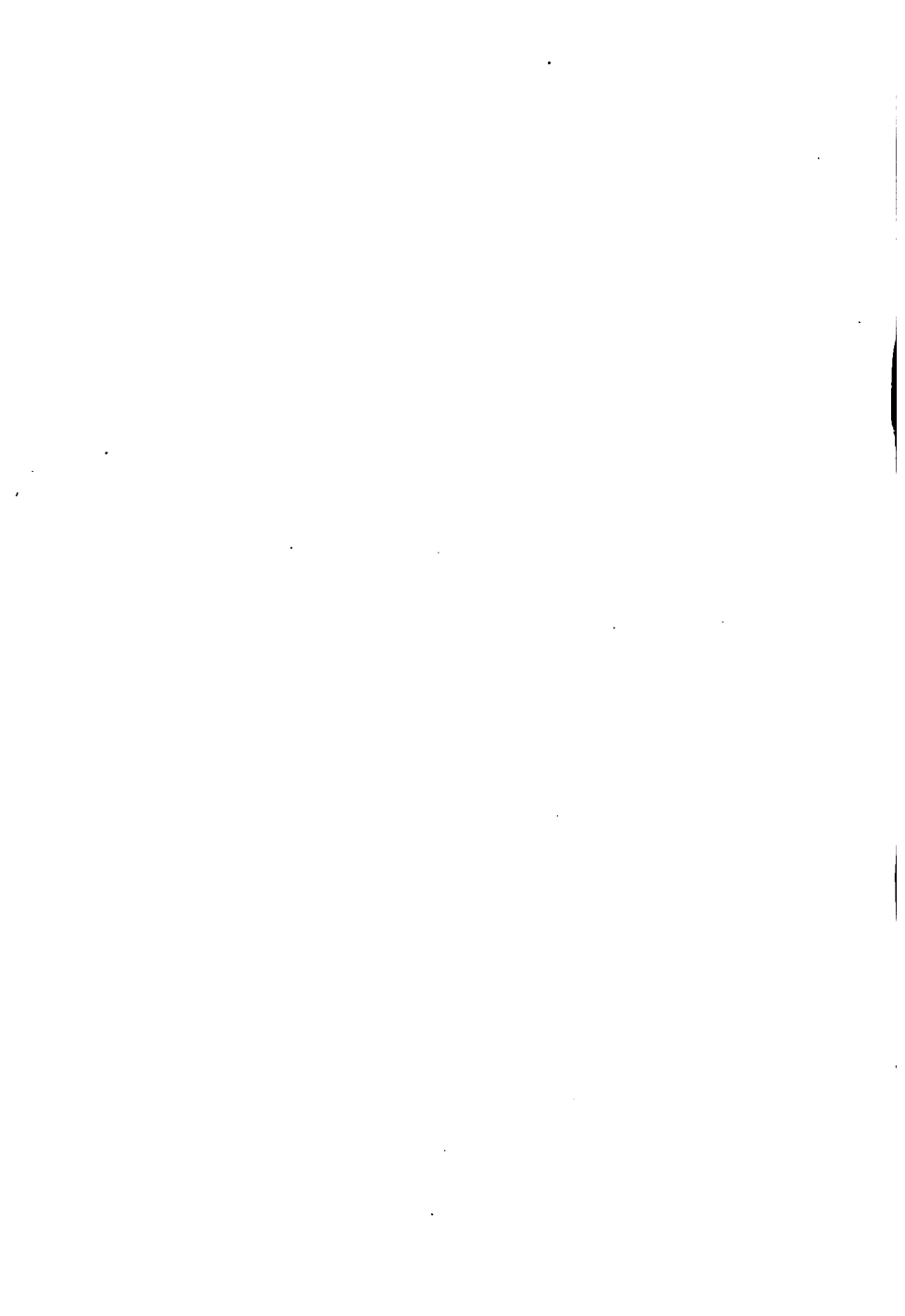
Jesus assumed the truth of immortality. He did not discuss the speculative question whether immortality is natural or an attainment. Neither did he fail to make it vividly clear that immortality, like our experience on Earth, depends for its value on our obedience to the laws of our being. His thought transcended time. Eternal life was not life belonging to eternity, but life in common

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

with time and eternity, above both, coincident with and independent of both. It was life from God and in God, life in society here and there, life abundant and growing, demanding prepared environment for a preparing character, an environment adapted to the needs of each, and directed by the Heavenly Father in his universal problem of educating and training his family. He has undertaken the work and he will carry it to a successful issue. The *proof* of immortality for a given person is another matter. Shall we exist or live? As we answer this question, in this world, each one for himself, we admit or reject an enlarging sense or personal proof of the dignity of life, the humanity of God, the victory of righteousness and immortality itself.







This book should be returned to
the Library on or before the last date
stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred
by retaining it beyond the specified
time.

Please return promptly.

